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KENNETH MATHESON TAYLOR
FUND

GIVEN IN 1899 BY
JESSIE TAYLOR PHILIPS

IN MEMORY OF HER BROTHER
KENNETH MATHESON TAYLOR
(Class of 1890)

FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE

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THE CENTAUR'S BOOTY

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BY · T. · STURGE · MOORE

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THE CENTAUR'S BOOTY

[On one that stands out above a waste of boulders, the old Centaur, PHOLUS, lies gazing forth into the deepening twilight; at last, having sighed, he speaks:]

Black my thoughts are, black the hills and mountains,
Ocean a sombre grey,
And the sky darkens.
There! lights are there; yea, torch-light flashes,
Travelling the wide way
Forth from yon city:
Men shake them, ah! the crowd pursues him:
Wildly they glance and flare
By mob rage shaken;
They stop, collect—ah, ah, an hundred!
Two! out-numbered, there,
He must be taken.
They slay him, slay my friend, my brother;
He bleeds there—faints there—dies—
Even now his throes are bitter.
I of centaurs am the last then;
Why should I longer live?
To die were fitter;
Never shall mine eyes behold
What soothed my father's gaze when his grew old;
Never watch young bodies that renew
The pleasant memories of mine early years

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Doing now all that I then would do;
With what zest such youth careers
Merely for the sake of speed!
They wrestle—being more and other
Than noblest man, than grandest steed—
Each one with his twofold brother.
Ah, to be last of centaurs living!
No young ones gallop on the hills;
Nor can I bring, in hopes of giving
Due chastisement to yonder town,
With noise as when a torrent fills,
A tide of hooves that thunder down,
Wrath from the Thracian hills.—
Avert thy death I cannot,
Medon, my friend;
Helpless, I even plan not
Thy foes to end;
Nor will I shed a tear,
Who still have known
How vain hope would appear
When truth was known;
We were not born to grow
And gather sway
But to a weakling foe
To yield each day;
Since numbers and not worth

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The Gods decree
Shall rule and foul the earth,
What is, must be.
[He remains silent, gazing forth into the deep night until the sound of hooves is heard in the distance, when he raises his head and moans.]
Oh, that mine ears had lost their hearing!
Or that my heart were strong enough
To ban new hopes! yea, they are nearing;
It cannot be a mere wild horse,
They are too steady in their fall;
A man might scarcely ride at all
On such a night, not hold his course
With constant careful purposed speed;
It is, oh! it must be, of need,
Medon, my only friend and brother.
[A VOICE rises some distance away.]
Medon am I, and no other.

PHOLUS

Hail! art thou wounded? stay thou there, I come:
Oh, clamber not upon these boulders, friend,
To jar thy wound! I shall soon be with thee.
That burden in thine arms can be no girl;
It is too small.

MEDON

No wound have I, nor have

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I rapt a woman hither; 'tis a child,
A boy.

PHOLUS

Of what use to us is a child?

MEDON

He sleeps; he struggled, bit, roared, howled, at length
He wept himself to sleep: behold these limbs,
Sturdy, well-knit! . . . Would that there were more light
And thou should'st see a child as brave for health
And strength, as violent and full of passion. . . .
Despite his two legs, 'tis a centaur nature.

PHOLUS

Women sometimes bear better than they would.

MEDON

When the moon rises, those thy words will seem
Far truer than thou thinkest yet; O Pholus,
All that thou said'st before I left thee, worked
And struggled in my brain, and when I came
Among the farms, and saw them as thou said'st. . . .
The first I saw was like a singing flower;
As though a tall pale blossom had a voice
She in a little coppice stood for shade,
Her distaff in one hand, while with the other
She twirled the spindle slowly towards the ground
And looked up singing, like an open flower:

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I saw her weakness in her beauty strong;
And knew she loved herself, frail though she was;
And felt she must be worse than wine to me;
Then, far within, I heard thy words like stones
That drop down through an empty quarry's womb
Slow ring—"For vain it is that they pretend
That either gods have joy or fate ensures
To crown this virtue born of women's dreams,
This worship of the weak which they call pity:
Nothing is pitied of the gods and fate."
Oh! as when one has swum too wide a lake
And faint, exhausted, strikes the beach at last,
With hooves that scarce may stead him—so, to me
Who had been battling with a subtler flood,
Came, like a fresh breeze to a poppied dell
"Nothing is pitied of the gods and fate."
Could I have dreamed Apollo might be kind,
Or Zeus think of me, or Fate hear my prayer;
I had not turned and fled her as I did,
I had not felt so young and glad as that.

PHOLUS

I was concerned thou shouldst so dream of women
Since that thy fair Hipponoë was dead;
Thou leftst me very heavy when thou wentest
To snatch a woman from the lowlands yonder,
And mock thy widowed heart with human love.

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MEDON

All thou hadst said went with me and was strong:
Besides, I always carry in my mind
My dead Hipponoë;
The place I found her in,
An arrow through her neck,
Another lodged deep in her ripening womb;
I found her, where they left her, in her blood;
I laid the mountain goat's kid I had brought
Upon her hair; upon her raven hair
The white new-strangled kid we should have dressed
And eaten of together;
Both were dead;
I buried both within a single grave:
Besides thy words,—her brown arms, the white kid
Between them laid upon her thick black hair;
The patch of blood-stained grass
Mid the bright grass still green that grew all round:—
Besides thy words I had this vision with me,
So felt we were the last of all our race;
If one of the two last became the slave
Of a slight blossom with a female voice,
Which by some witch-craft Circe bade to grow
In a sun-chequered woodland coppice, there
To sing until a centaur came that way
And knelt him down to worship day and night,

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Letting his strength leak out at eyes and ears,
While only Pholus, saddened with old age,
Lived as the noble centaurs lived of old
And made the hills redound unto his praise!

PHOLUS

I can remember still an ancient centaur
Who by a nymph was won away from us—
Though he had had a wife, would he have fought;
For then were many females of our race
And none, who owned his strength, need have lived lone:
But a white nymph there dwelt among the rocks,
And, while she lay before him, he would kneel
And pore upon her eyes;
She was not as a woman who grows old,
Loses her charm and frees those whom she snared:
Nay, till he died her beauty held him fast;
No joy he knew, no change, but, in a trance
He gazed upon her snowy languid form,
And sought he knew not what within her eyes.

MEDON

I thought of him; for thou, long years ago,
Hadst spoken sadly of his wasted life,
And how his death was like a blasted tree's
Ragged with dead moss, whitened with crumbling tinder,
Gnarled, writhen, old, patient and desolate.
For she, she left him as the white owl quits

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The old stump ere it falls; she left him young,
Dreamy and calm as she had been before
He found her like a sleeping water there,
A mirror visited by all the stars
And which at noon-day seems a golden shield
Dropped by a Titan mid the rocks he hurled,
Or which, hurled at him, drove him wounded thence.
Some say the nymphs are women whom the gods
Have loved and given life to, ageless life,
And left each in the place where she was loved,
A memory to which they may return
And find a joy long past yet look like joy;
Each lovely spot still cradle of the form
Whose youth and beauty caused their sojourn in it;
The virgin they deflowered, virgin still;
Ah! fatal is that youth that is not young,
That purity that is no longer pure
But seems so; ah! how kind can beauty seem!

PHOLUS

'Tis like enough the gods are pleased with evil,
And thus pollute the beauty of the earth,
Hiding their wantonness as spring cloaks winter,—
Who false proclaims that death, decay and ruin
Exist not, while she really battens on them
In rash, triumphant lust and carelessness,—
As women heed not what courageous life

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They draw man from; the better, the more homage
They sip, the richer flavour soaks their dream!

MEDON

It may be so with some.

PHOLUS

With most it is.

MEDON

Not many have such beauty; if the Gods
Take some to make them nymphs, but few are left.

PHOLUS

Enough; for it goes hard if once in life
A woman have not her brief hour of charm,
And find not some man weaker than her spell.

MEDON

The next I saw were not so fair as flowers;
The thought of her I left within the wood
Made them seem noteless, common as their tasks;
And then I found the mother of this child:
She might have been a centauress half hid
By plants of broom; for shoulders, arms, and breasts
Were bare and brown; the head was crowned with hair
As with the symbol of a mighty realm;
All else was hidden in a yellow robe:
There sate she, doing nothing with her hands,
But quiet as Demeter in her cave;
I moved me round till I could watch her eyes,

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And then I felt my strength was like a dream,
And as a vision foreign seemed my shape,
And all that I have done like misty tales;
Silence fell round me such as made the noon
As proper for the advent of a god
As midnight is for sudden Artemis;
Then were thy words found voiceless, as when trees
On a still night seem hardly to be there:
Hast thought on sleep at all?
On dreamless slumber pondered ever?
What are we when we do not know ourselves?
Where are we? Is
The world about us still?
We count it certain that the world is there;
For we see others sleep,
And wake in the same place;
But, oh! how heavy on the mind it lies,
The thought of dreamless sleep!
If we will think of it,
We find no help at all,
Nor can we say one word;
All of me slept except what gazed on her
And even so she was not like a dream.

PHOLUS

Ah! Medon, Medon, how didst thou escape?
For every woman is a thing of pity,

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That teaches love of weakness to the strong;
They dream of pity when their hands do naught,
And, if they smile, have thought on tenderness.

MEDON

Nay, not this woman: hers were dreamless eyes.

PHOLUS

Fool, Medon, she will lure thee back to her;
For 'tis the nursing of a tender dream
That gives such power to a woman's glance,
Troubling so the hearts of centaurs even;
Those girls that had this novelty of gaze,
They spread this madness through the race of men;
For men were once as centaurs, proud of strength,
And scorned to win by numbers—men were once
Our equals and their wives wholesome as ours,
Obedient to the male and calm with health!

MEDON

This woman was as calm sea is, and hale.

PHOLUS

Ah! Medon, strong men lied first to defend
Base weakness; yea, for women's sake they lied;
Their words were as our own when I was young.

MEDON

I speak as centaurs speak and not as men.

PHOLUS

Fondly thou spak'st; thus men have come to speak:

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Yet always had man half a mind to this;
Loving beyond the circle of his peers,
And pleased to talk,
Nay, happy even to laugh
With weaklings and with slaves;
Prizing his woman not for wholesome soundness
And power to bear him sturdy little ones,
But for a sickly grace, a languid air,
And instant exhibition of vile fear;
Because she hath the coward's knees at once,
When even a stoat bolts in and out the hedge.

MEDON

Nay, hear me speak, good Pholus, and believe
You are too quick to find me like a man;
I have not brought the woman back with me,
Yet, had I wished to bring her, she were here.

PHOLUS

Speak, Medon: thou wast ever amorous,
And wentest forth to rape a woman hither;
Therefore forgive my no way groundless doubt.

MEDON

There sate the woman by her husband's door,
And I was in an orchard screened by trees.
Within the house there came a sudden cry;
This child had hurt himself and forth he came,
The little storm, weeping and howling too,

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And flung his naked body 'gainst the knees,
Ruddy and brown, against the yellow skirt
Of his calm mother; who looked down on him;
He stopped his howling, held pinched fingers up;
She took and kissed them, spoke low words to him,
And soon he smiled, stood up and rubbed his eyes,
Then gazed all round. His black and curly head,
The steadiness he had upon his legs,
His pouts that came to nothing in a smile,
And every part of him already male,
Forceful and eager, filled my mind with ease.

The centaur colt is beautiful and strange
Beside its mother, gazing from a cave;
Wondering that earth so fair is;
Asking the name of trees,
Of sun and moon and hill;
Hearing to-day, as for the first time still,
The answer that she made him yesterday:
—To see him stand admiring width of space
And its soft-filling bath of light and air,
Smiling at evening's silence or the noon's,
Then, thinking that he hears a distant bird,
Half reeling with delight,
Impassioned for that voice of simple joy
Whose easy triumph over sweetest words

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Makes him afraid his mother hears it not,
(Although he sees she hears)
Because she is less shaken than himself,
Less new to pleasure,
Less ignorant of pain;
To see him fills pubescent youth with glee
Almost as uncontainable as his,
Almost as novel, as ignorant almost,
Which makes him seek the youthful virgin out;
Which, when he finds her, makes her meek to him,
Not as before, suspicious and aloof.
O Pholus, thus I found Hipponoë;
Yet every promise that had filled my mind
Was butchered when she met her cruel death.

PHOLUS

If weakness always had
The promise of a colt,
Then, then, indeed,
Man's worship of it were not quite insane.
But this, oh, this! is truth,
That nowhere else it seems to promise even,
And only seems in youth;
The promise of a colt lies in his strength,
So of a virgin in her strength it lies,
Though both indeed are weak;
Yea, man's thought is confused

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And not our thought, who see
Thus much alone of good;
Betwixt a vile beginning and vile end,
Welcome to contemplation of the mind,
We, centaurs, clearly see a few years' span
Wherein thought may be pleased,
Purpose effective more or less,
Our bodies strong, our enemies afraid—
A few years thus we see, but even they
Do dodge calamities and end
In loss of strength; and worse,
More bitter yet than loss of strength, in loss
Of all significance.
It is not good that, though the earth be fair,
Our strength is so entangled and hemmed in;
Gratitude is not due
For gifts so given that they mock themselves:
Wisely we judge of gods,
Wisely we judge of fate,
Who look for nothing that we cannot take,
Expecting loss of all we cannot keep,
And know our strength will often not suffice,
And know that we shall end in wretchedness;
Yet, while strength lasts, on what it may acquire
Expend it, and rejoice that so much is
As we would have it be.

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MEDON

How this child sleeps!
In silence like the future's where our dreams
Wander and yet find naught but what they bring!
The room of all expectancy is here!
Thus spread the landscape in the happy eyes
Of loved Hipponoë!
Ah! here,
As in an eagle's egg,
Enjoyment of the empire of the air,
Is lodged a prophecy, a thing to be:
Behold, the moon doth rise;
Her light, see, steals
Across the lichened surface of this slab;
It reaches now his little foot, behold!
What roads, what sea-shores, and what craggy heights,
Softly and firmly planted, shall this tread
And carry with it all our will's success;—
Or else, the mere frustration of our love
It shall proceed with over marble floors,
Or where those women with the crafty eyes,
Pacing soft carpets in their curtained bowers,
Bewitch the strength that might have made a man
The centaur's brother.

PHOLUS

O Medon, what is in this child that you

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Without replying to my words of weight,
Dote so upon its feebleness?
We cannot rear it,
There is no hope we could;
Any of all the puking evils that beset
A weanling must suffice
To quite frustrate our best of care.

MEDON

Ah! Pholus, thou art old and slow to hope;
Yet hope, while we have strength for it, is good.
What though the day draw near
When I shall be as tardy as thyself
To please my mind with happiness not felt,
But fancied on the wing and longed for, longed for!
This night is now all lovely with the moon,
And, must to-morrow night be drenched in rain,
Yet we indulge our eyes with this delight
And so far banish every thought of storm
That tempest seems a thing impossible,
And even the clouds which erewhile clad the earth
Are hard to think of; hard to think of, Pholus,
While moonlight softens all the stars
And drapes the innocent and delicate charm
Of sleeping infancy o'er rough stern hills
And lights the salt sea up with such a smile
As comes upon the features of a child

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When in his dreams he sees a butterfly
Float gorgeous down and nearly within reach.

PHOLUS

Ah! yes;
The bitterest thought that we are doomed to think
Is that our joys were always groundless, always!—
And more of wisdom, more of knowledge, more
Of self-control, of power would have turned
Those hours, the only sweet ones we have known,
To indignation or perhaps despair.

MEDON

Oh! then, I thank my weakness; even I
Find weakness helpful as a woman does:
Yet think that I am stronger than thyself.

PHOLUS

Ah! for the moment stronger; but such strength
Carries within it such a grief as mine,
And thou dost know it surely even as I.

MEDON

Hug thy wisdom, but hark: the child is here
And I who love him stronger am than thou:
Proud of the hope that's mine, I say, do this,
Help me rear up the child—and oh! assume,
Even if thou canst not feel, some cheerfulness,
Or I will leave thee and, with the babe alone,
Live out my active term how brief soe'er.

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PHOLUS

Yea, be a fool while thou hast strength for folly
And force my wisdom serve thy wantonness,
Thou wilt but prove my bitterest thought most true.

MEDON

Enough, old grumbler; ha! thou mak'st me feel
Almost as I felt towards this youngster's dam,
When he did clamber on her knee and tried
To seize her breast with hungry eagerness:
She pushed him so that he slipped from her lap
And, when he climbed again, she pushed again;
At first, he only laughed at each rebuff,
But soon vexation changed the note of it;
Ere long like crested wave he raged and mounted;
She, with provoking strength, lazy contempt,
Baffled his wrath as easily as when
His first assaults had been half sapped by laughing.
It was her will to wean him, doubtless; yea,
As it is thine to minish now my joy,
Because it doth surpass the bounds prescribed
To thine old age. Her breast was rich enough;
And thou hast strength sufficient for much joy,
Though not such great joys as are mine, may be.
Why did she envy him the milk he craved?
She knew no more than all thy wisdom knows
Why thou dost strive to check and thwart my hopes

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Since thou admitt'st them necessary, ha?
Nay, she had more of reason, since, ere long
She would have had, or may be had, another
Whose need of milk was greater than his was:
Though for her sleek contempt of his fine rage
There can be no excuse. He left her there,
As I will leave thee if thou so persist,
And with his little arms before his eyes,
And shaken with the fury he was in,
Staggered towards the orchard and towards me
Who guessed her will, as cold to my desire
As unto his; content too ripe in her
To let her feel for those the edge of nature
Makes wild with hunger, angry with desire.
I seized the child; perchance
She fathoms want by now;
By now she paces bleak desire's den.
The music of her first alarum shrieks
Inspirited my career;
It made me blind; I took the wrong highway;
And well-nigh was I in the town before
I knew the road mistaken, nor could re-find,
But made bad worse; for soon the hunt was up;
Thou sawest their torches as the evening fell;
I think thou must have seen them even from here.

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PHOLUS

I did, and will be pleasant to thee, Medon,
And nurse thy joys; for thou didst very well:
That women should be proud, who reign by pity,
To the sole beings they have the power to scorn—
Their children and their lovers—that they should
Makes all my blood boil in me; let them learn
To acquiesce in all things to the male.

MEDON

Ha, ha! the centaur glee shall rouse the hills
And turn their echoes giddy yet awhile,
Since Pholus joins with me and shares my joy
And is a centaur still, despite old age!
Come, revel in thy strength; adore that fleetness,
Made musical with hooves, that leaves the man—
Even the man on horseback as a wave
Is left all angry, toiling after blasts
That sweep the ocean with tremendous glee!

PHOLUS

I will; I will! my youth resurges now,
And shall employ unto the latest pulse
Life as the centaurs have determined wise;
Not in a vain regret that things are ill,
But exultation that good strength is mine.

MEDON

The nights are short, and, hard upon the moon,

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The sun will rise; yea, half the light in heaven
Is his already.
Ha! the youngster wakes—
Ho! you rogue, my booty;
Laugh, little giant!
Shake thou thy stout limbs
Like a god's baby;
Be careless and laugh!
[The CHILD, whom he has tickled, crows.]

MEDON

Ha, ha!
Crow thou thy heartful!
Catch him, old Pholus.
Safe as a bird has he flown to thine arms.

PHOLUS

Ho! he's so warm and so soft;
He clings to my beard like an ant;
His eyes are like birds
Quick peeping betwixt the tall stalks of the corn;
He shakes with delight;
He loves me already.—
Come, call me grand-daddy, come call me grand-dad.

CHILD

Grand-daddy and dad.

MEDON

He has called me his dad;

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Toss him back to these arms.
Like a bird through the air, he is caught!
Oh! he shall run naked
Till hairs on him grow,
And he shall climb mountains
And trample their snow
Till hooves on him grow!
Till hooves on him grow!

PHOLUS

Back with him! back to the arms
Of grand-daddy! the rogue,
He has come; has he come to his nest?
He shall feed on the best;
Here are berries, blue berries as soft
As the nipple that nourished him erst.
I squeeze the soft pulp through his lips;
He has eaten from my hand the first;
And therefore I hold him aloft;
Both my hands make a chair for his hips;
Such a chair, in the prow of men's ships,
Carries rovers above the loud billows;
So, through this copse of stunt willows,
My furrow I cleave with my lord.

MEDON

Nay, Pholus, to me give him now;
For I can go faster than thou;

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And he should be borne in the van;
Make a throne for his hips with my one hand I can!
See, now, he sits on the palm and the while
My fingers support him behind, and my thumb
He grasps with his left hand.—Yea, smile;
For the sun, from his bed that doth come,
Makes thee golden of all things the first.
Above the hill's top I lift thee so high
That I make thee the one golden cloud in the sky!

PHOLUS

Shake thou thy little right fist at Apollo,
The God that is proud to be flattered by man;
For thou art the first that shall say:
"Though thou give me the day
Not to thee will I bow, no, nor can
Thine anger turn fate from the path she doth follow;
'Tis thy function to shine,
'Tis thy life, as to revel is mine!"

MEDON

Yea, he shall have sons
And make much of his life;
The hills shall be his.

PHOLUS

Down like a torrent he runs
And bears off a wife;
His hands shall she kiss

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And be humble to him
And humour his whim;
She shall grow healthy and strong,
And her hair shall be long;
He shall strip from her all other dress,
Then the ease of her nakedness
She shall learn from her lord:
And her daughters, no more than wild mares,
Dream their beauty a thing they may hoard,
Nor consider their bodies as snares
Engines baited with shame and with pleasure
In equal measure.

MEDON

No, no, for they shall be glad
With simplicity clad,
Not conceiving that woven a cloth is
More fine or more soft than their skin!
Or that tint on the pinion of moth is
Which they could look lovelier in
Than the brown and the flush of their health!
Or that any other wealth
Could honour them more than children glowing;
The red delight within them flowing!

PHOLUS (holding up the child towards the sun)

See, see, thou king of the year!
Look! what a father is here

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For the years to come!
This child is a male, dost thou see?

MEDON

Apollo, hast thou no fear
That thine oracle might be dumb
For all the use it will be,
When a race from this child sprung,
Has conquered and cleansed all lands,
So that nowhere a temple stands
And to pray there is no skilled tongue?

PHOLUS

Give, give him to me once more;
For here I have found a comb,
Its juice has so sweetened my thumb
That naught he has sucked at before
Was ever so much to his mind,
Nor any one else so kind
As Pholus, his gnarled grandsire.

MEDON

Come, climb with him higher and higher!

PHOLUS

I will wrap the whole comb in green leaves;
For I have nursed children before
And remember how hungry they were.
Ah! my heart is still angry and grieves
For the colts that Bremoosa bore,

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That were slain while they clung to her.

MEDON

He shall avenge them, and thee
That wouldst not have been barren to me
My espoused, my Hipponoë.

PHOLUS

Yea, he shall avenge all our race;
The grandchildren of those who slew them
His children shall slay;
Though for pity they seek in his face,
His arrows shall drive right through them
And he not know why they pray.

MEDON

He shall milk the wild goats on the mountains;
His feet shall grow sure as their feet;
He shall bathe in the clear rock fountains,
Till so clear is his mind and so deep;
And his joy shall be high as the snow-line
And embrace a vast plain with delight;
His laugh shall twang true as a bow-line,
Like arrows his songs take their flight.

PHOLUS

And none who were pupils of Cheiron
Were ever so strong or so wise,
Nor ever their eyes glowed with fire on
Battle's eve as our rage in his eyes

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Shall glow without hindrance of pity,
Shall burn without let from remorse,
As havoc from city to city
He hounds on his destinied course.

MEDON

But first, in high valleys,
When June is in blow,
He shall sleep and run naked
Till hairs on him grow!
Or in the hale winter
Shall powder their snow
Till hooves on him grow!
Till hooves on him grow!

[Winding up the valleys and across the ridges, ever deeper and higher they travel into the heart of the range, by turns carrying the child and arousing the echoes.]

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THE GAZELLE AND OTHER POEMS
BY T. MOORE

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The author wishes to thank the editors of "The Speaker" and "The Saturday Review" for their kind permission to reprint "A Spanish Picture" and "To Idleness."

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THE GAZELLES

When the sheen on tall summer grass is pale,
Across blue skies white clouds float on
In shoals, or disperse and singly sail,
Till, the sun being set, they all are gone:

Yet, as long as they may shine bright in the sun,
They flock or stray through the daylight bland,
While their stealthy shadows like foxes run
Beneath where the grass is dry and tanned:

And the waste, in hills that swell and fall,
Goes heaving into yet dreamier haze;
And a wonder of silence is over all
Where the eye feeds long like a lover's gaze:

Then, cleaving the grass, gazelles appear
(The gentler dolphins of kindlier waves)
With sensitive heads alert of ear;
Frail crowds that a delicate hearing saves,

That rely on the nostrils' keenest power,
And are governed from trance-like distances
By hopes and fears, and, hour by hour,
Sagacious of safety, snuff the breeze.

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They keep together, the timid hearts ;
And each one's fear with a panic thrill
Is passed to an hundred ; and if one starts
In three seconds all are over the hill.

A Nimrod might watch, in his hall's wan space,
After the feast, on the moonlit floor,
The timorous mice that troop and race,
As tranced o'er those herds the sun doth pour ;

Like a wearied tyrant sated with food
Who envies each tiniest thief that steals
Its hour from his abstracted mood,
For it living zest and beauty reveals.

He alone, save the quite dispassionate moon,
Sees them ; she stares at the prowling pard
Who surprises their sleep and, ah ! how soon
Is riding the weakest or sleepiest hard !

Let an agony's nightmare course begin,
Four feet with five spurs a piece control,
Like a horse thief reduced to save his skin
Or a devil that rides a human soul !

The race is as long as recorded time,
Yet brief as the flash of assassin's knife ;
For 'tis crammed as history is with crime
'Twixt the throbs at taking and losing life ;

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Then the warm wet clutch on the nape of the neck,
Through which the keen incisors drive;
Then the fleet knees give, down drops the wreck
Of yesterday's pet that was so alive.

Yet the moon is naught concerned, ah no!
She shines as on a drifting plank
Far in some northern sea-stream's flow
From which two numbed hands loosened and sank.

Such thinning their number must suffer; and worse
When hither at times the Shah's children roam,
Their infant listlessness to immerse
In energy's ancient upland home:

For here the shepherd in years of old
Was taught by the stars, and bred a race
That welling forth from these highlands rolled
In tides of conquest o'er earth's face:

On piebald ponies or else milk-white,
Here, with green bridles in silver bound,
A crescent moon on the violet night
Of their saddle cloths, or a sun rayed round,—

With tiny bells on their harness ringing,
And voices that laugh and are shrill by starts,
Prancing, curvetting, and with them bringing
Swift chetahs cooped up in light-wheeled carts,

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They come, and their dainty pavilions pitch
In some valley, beside a sinuous pool,
Where a grove of cedars towers in which
Herons have built, where the shade is cool;

Where they tether their ponies to low hung boughs,
Where long through the night their red fires gleam,
Where the morning's stir doth them arouse
To their bath in the lake, as from dreams to a dream.

And thence in an hour their hunt rides forth,
And the chetahs course the shy gazelle
To the east or west or south or north,
And every eve in a distant vale

A hetacomb of the slaughtered beasts
Is piled; tongues loll from breathless throats;
Round large jet eyes the horsefly feasts—
Jet eyes, which now a blue film coats:

Dead there they bleed, and each prince there
Is met by his sister, wife, or bride—
Delicious ladies with long dark hair,
And soft dark eyes, and brows arched wide,

In quilted jacket, embroidered sash,
And tent-like skirts of pleated lawn;
While their silk-lined jewelled slippers flash
Round bare feet bedded like pools at dawn:

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So choicefully prepared to please,
Young, female, royal of race and mood,
In indolent compassion these
O'er those dead beauteous creatures brood:

They lean some minutes against their friend,
A lad not slow to praise himself,
Who tells how this one met his end
Out-raced, or trapped by leopard stealth,

And boasts his chetahs fleetest are;
Through his advice the chance occurred,
That leeward vale by which the car
Was well brought round to head the herd.

Seeing him bronzed by sun and wind,
She feels his power and owns him lord,
Then, that his courage may please her mind,
With a soft coy hand half draws his sword,

Just shudders to see the cold steel gleam,
And drops it back in the long curved sheath;
She will make his evening meal a dream
And surround his sleep like some rich wreath

Of heavy-lidded flowers bewitched
To speak soft words of ecstasy
To wizard king old, wise, and enriched
With all save youth's and love's sweet glee.

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But, while they sleep, the orphaned herd
And wounded stragglers, through the night
Wander in pain, and wail unheard
To the moon and the stars so cruelly bright:

Why are they born? ah! why beget
They in the long November gloom
Heirs of their beauty, their fleetness,—yet
Heirs of their panics, their pangs, their doom?

That to princely spouses children are born
To be daintily bred and taught to please,
Has a fitness like the return of morn:
But why perpetuate lives like these?

Why, with horns that jar and with fiery eyes,
Should the male stags fight for the shuddering does
Through the drear dark nights, with frequent cries
From tyrant lust or outlawed woes?

Doth the meaningless beauty of their lives
Rave in the spring, when they course afar
Like the shadows of birds, and the young fawn strives
Till its parents no longer the fleetest are?

Like the shadows of flames which the sun's rays throw
On a kiln's blank wall, where glaziers dwell,
Pale shadows as those from glasses they blow,
Yet that lap at the blank wall and rebel,—

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Even so to my curious trance-like thought
Those herds move over those pallid hills,
With fever as of a frail life caught
In circumstance o'er-charged with ills;

More like the shadow of lives than life,
Or most like the life that is never born
From baffled purpose and foredoomed strife,
That in each man's heart must be hidden from scorn

Yet with something of beauty very rare
Unseizable, fugitive, half discerned;
The trace of intentions that might have been fair
In action, left on a face that yearned

But long has ceased to yearn, alas!
So faint a trace do they leave on the slopes
Of hills as sleek as their coats with grass;
So faint may the trace be of noblest hopes.

Yet why are they born to roam and die?
Can their beauty answer thy query, O soul?
Nay, nor that of hopes which were born to fly,
But whose pinions the common and coarse day stole.

Like that region of grassy hills outspread,
A realm of our thought knows days and nights
And summers and winters, and has fed
Ineffectual herds of vanished delights.

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Thy life is over now, Don Juan:
Thy fingers are so shrunk
That all their rings from off their cold tips crowd,
Where limp thy hand hath sunk;

On a trestle-table laid, Don Juan,
A half-mask near thine ear,
A visor black in which void gape two gaps
Where through thou oft didst leer.

Thou waitest for the priests, Don Juan,
To bear thee to thy grave;
Thou'rt theirs at length beyond all doubt, but ha!
Hast now no soul to save.

Thou wast brought home last night, Don Juan,
Upon a stable door;
Beneath a young nun's casement, found dropped dead,
Where thou hadst wooed of yore:

To pay their trouble then, Don Juan,
Those base grooms took thy sword;
A rapier to fetch gold, with shagreened sheath,
Wrought hand-grip, and silk cord;

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Which, with thy fame enhanced, Don Juan,
Were worth hidalgo's rent;
Yet on which now, at most, some few moidore
May by some fop be spent.

Dull brown a cloak enwraps, Don Juan,
Both thy lean shanks, one arm,
That old bird-cage thy breast, where like magpie
Thy heart hopped on alarm.

Yet out beyond thy cloak, Don Juan,
Thrust prim white-stocking'd feet—
Silk-stocking'd feet that in quadrille pranced round—
Slippers high-heeled and neat;

Thy silver-buckled shoes, Don Juan,
No more shall tread a floor,
Beside their heels upon the board lies now
A half-peeled onion's core:

Munching, a crone, that knew, Don Juan,
Thy best contrivéd plots,
Hobbles about the room, whose gaunt stone walls
Drear echo as she trots;

She makes her bundle up, Don Juan;
She'll not forget thy rings,
Thy buckles, nor silk stockings; nay, not she!
They'll go with her few things.

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Those lids she hath pulled down, Don Juan,
That lowered ne'er for shame;
No spark from beauty more in thy brain pan,
Shall make its tinder flame:

Thou hast enjoyed all that, Don Juan,
Which good resolves doth daunt,
Which hypocrites doth tempt to stake vile souls,
Which cowards crave and want;

Thou wast an envied man, Don Juan,
Long shalt be envied still;
Thou hadst thy beauty as the proud pard hath,
And instinct trained to skill.

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LINES ON TITIAN'S 'BACCHANAL' IN THE PRADO AT MADRID

She naked lies asleep beside the wine
That in a rill wanders through moss and flowers;
Her head thrown, and her hair, back o'er an urn
Whose metal glints from under crimpled gold
Of lately bound-up locks; while her flushed face
Breathes up toward open sky with fast-closed lids,—
As though, half-conscious, her complexion knew
Where stirred the tree-tops, where the blue was vast.
One arm, wrapped in a soft white crumpled vest,
An empty wine-dish guards; her breasts are young;
Young, although massive, torso, loins and thighs,
All hued as clouds are that the morning face.
Beside her foot three shadowed blue flowers glow,
Speedwell, or gentian, or some now lost gem
That then was found in Crete; some gem now lost,
Some precious flower, that then endeared the isles
To hearts of travelling gods and sailor princes.
Though friends of such an one here revel now,
And laugh, carouse, and dance, she hears them not;
Brown satyrs, mænads, men, these sing; and hark!
Birds sing, the sea is sighing, and the woods
Do sound as lovers love to hear them:—Sleep,
Sleep, oh, and wake no more; Bacchus has kissed
Thy lips, thine eyes, thy brow; thy joy and his
But lately were as one, therefore sleep on:

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Be all past woes forgotten in thy dream!
This noisy crew still haunts thee;—but unheard
They sing, and birds are singing; thou dost sleep:
These dance, carouse, and pledge each other's joy;
Slowly the tree-tops in the wind's embrace,
Dance too; lush branches and gay vestures float,
Float, wave and rustle, sighing to the wind;
But thou art still; thou sleepest, art divine.
Upon the purple clusters, in his drowse,
The vast Silenus rolls; and through the grass
The red juice trickles, forming rills and streams;
Comes down cascading, prattles past thy couch,
And winds on sea-ward; thou remainest, thou,
Perfectly still remainest and dost sleep.
These soon will leave thee,—satyr, mænad, faun,
Light-hearted young folk,—these will never stay
Past sundown nor out-watch the pale long eve,
But troop afar with fainter riot and song:
Then, when thou art alone and the wind dropped,
When the night finds thee, mayst thou still be sleeping!
She then, for ever and for aye, will take thee
To her deep dwelling and unechoing halls;
How could she leave thee? she who owns them all—
Owns all the stars, whose beauty is complete,
Whose joy is perfect, and whose home is peace;
While all their duty is to shine for love.

xx.

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LOVE'S FIRST COMMUNION

'Hear me! answer! Thou so sweet,
Speak, ah speak, May Evening, where
I with love with love may meet?
Or on land, or far seas over,
Near me, now, or soon, or ne'er?
Whisper! am I born a lover
As were in the days of yore
Pelleas and Pellenore?
Or is early death for me
Born to prowess on the sea?'

'—Listen, ponder, understand!
Love lies ambushed in each bud
Like a lady's maiden hand
Stowed in warm and scented glove,
And as through her veins the blood
Circling sweetens, so flows love
Like ripe syrup through a fruit,
Secret tingling rich and mute,—
Like, ah! like on midnight hush
Tears that under eyelids gush.'

'Ardent softly-breathing Even,
What thou whisperest that is truth;
Through and through me throbs belief:
By thy star, the first in heaven

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Hesperus the early bright,
Tell me, shall I love? "For brief,
Brief thy days!"
Song there is thus wails on youth,
"For the May time, no time stays,"
So it says;
Speak, then speak, ere thou be night
Dread with stars and extreme height.'

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DESIRE MUSES
To braid a crown of daisies
Meet for your dusky hair—
To lead you through mountain places
Suiting your solemn air—
Hear your laughter, buoyant thunder
Like the torrent's tunnelling under
Coloured rocks to issue glancing
In a thousand small jets dancing
Down a stair of rinséd stones—
To heap your lap with scented cones,
Fir cones! would make a giant of joy
Out of a timid and awkward boy.

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DESIRE SINGS

If only I were the sky,
What days would be thine!
No more than thou would'st of a kind,
Whether sunshine, or shower, or wind!
If the heavens above thee were I,
How the stars would shine!
What a friend the moon would be
To guard or companion thee!

Thy days thou should'st fill like a rill
That has found the best
Of seaward paths, and gay
Takes bedded in flowers its way,
Were mine but the life of a hill:
But, were I the west,
Thou would'st sink all beauty and light
Home to my heart every night.

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DESIRE PLEADS

Time flits away, time flits away, Lady;
Alas, not time, but we
Whose childish limbs once skipped so fairily,
And still to dance are free.

Things are forgot, things are forgot, Lady;
Alas, not things alone,
But Dames whose sweet, sweet names chimed airily
Are no more loved or known.

How bright those stars! and think, each bright star stays,
Though all else fair be brief;
Leisure have they and peace and length of days
And love, 'tis my belief.

For Love gives light, Love vows his light will last.
And Love desireth peace.
Then bind those eyes through which tears rise so fast
And see as blind Love sees.

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LET LOVE SUFFICE

The lily yearns to leave her stem,
And sail forth on the moonlit stream;
Yon small cloud petal-white above,
Floats by in envied ecstasies:
There are who only long for love,
O'er whom we raptured soar serene;
For all that ere this night hath been
We can forget.
There are who kneel on aching knees,
They fain would hear the morning breeze
That blows not yet.

There are who hate us—what of them?
Mere motes, without the warm live beam
Up which we soar to Love's far throne,
Invisible and cold, they drift
Through regions where we are not known.
Since rapture tides two hearts between,
All that before this night hath been
Forget, forget!
Ask not who gave; enjoy the gift!
Not yet is day; fears are too swift.
Not yet, not yet!

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THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

Farewell, farewell, too fixed to answer love
That was not to the '*when*' and '*how*' exact
Of thy brave dreams, or failed to counteract
The soaring of thy fresh young hopes above!

Too eager to be happy, and with hope
Too blinded to foresee the Future's force
Which needs must hound thee onward toward remorse,
Proving, if Love, nought else with Time may cope!

Then wilt thou weep and be all, all alone;
More lonely than the cavern hearts of hills
Which from the stalactite the slow drop fills,
In falling, with weak sound—a tear's on stone.

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TO IDLENESS

O Idleness, too fond of me.
Begone, I know and hate thee!
Nothing canst thou of pleasure see
In one that so doth rate thee;

For empty are both mind and heart
While thou with me dost linger;
More profit would to thee impart
A babe that sucks its finger.

I know thou hast a better way
To spend these hours thou squand'rest;
Some lad toils in the trough to-day
Who groans because thou wand'rest;

A bleating sheep he dowses now
Or wrestles with ram's terror;
Ah, 'mid the washing's hubbub, how
His sighs reproach thine error!

He knows and loves thee, Idleness;
For when his sheep are browsing,
His open eyes enchant and bless
A mind divinely drowsing;

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No slave to sleep, he wills and sees
From hill-lawns the brown tillage;
Green winding lanes and clumps of trees,
Far town or nearer village,

The sea itself; the fishing fleet
Where more, thine idle lovers,
Heark'ning to sea-mews find thee sweet
Like him who hears the plovers.

Begone; those haul their ropes at sea,
These plunge sheep in yon river:
Free, free from toil thy friends, and me
From Idleness deliver!

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RENAISSANCE

O happy soul, forget thy self!
This that has haunted all the past,
That conjured disappointments fast,
That never could let well alone;
That, climbing to achievement's throne,
Slipped on the last step; this that wove
Dissatisfaction's clinging net,
And ran through life like squandered pelf:—
This that till now has been thyself
Forget, O happy soul, forget.

If ever thou didst aught commence,—
Set'st forth in spring-tide woods to rove,—
Or, when the sun in July throve,
Didst plunge into calm bay of ocean
With fine felicity in motion,—
Or, having climbed some high hill's brow,
Thy toil behind thee like the night,
Stoodst in the chill dawn's air intense;—
Commence thus now, thus recommence:
Take to the future as to light.

Not as a bather on the shore
Strips of his clothes, glad soul, strip thou:
He throws them off, but folds them now;
Although he for the billows yearns,

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To weight them down with stones he turns;
To mark the spot he scans the shore;
Of his return he thinks before.
Do thou forget
All that, until this joy franchised thee,
Tainted thee, stained thee, or disguised thee;
For gladness, henceforth without let,
Be thou a body, naked, fair;
And be thy kingdom all the air
Which the noon fills with light;
And be thine actions every one,
Like to a dawn or set of sun,
Robed in an ample glory's peace;
Since thou hast tasted this great glee
Whose virtue prophesies in thee
That wrong is wholly doomed, is doomed and bound to cease.

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TO LEDA AND OTHER ODES

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TO MICHAEL FIELD

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TO LEDA

Wiseliest confirmed of river bathers, thou,
Most nobly wooed of any god-loved queen,
That oft didst swimming, like a snow-white plough,
The swiftest crystal furrow, then didst lean,
A panting majesty, on willow arms
Which, yielding, cradled thee, while all thy charms
Lay, open-bloomed, beneath the eye of heaven;
Thus lapped serene, through many a summer even,
Consenting to the silence, thou wast seen—

Not only of white swans and cygnets gray,
Dove-coloured cygnets, swans of arching pride
That passed thee in abstraction; clouds of day
Sail azure as such birds o'er waters glide,
And clouds will no more pause near kings' fair homes,—
Though queens watch at the casements while their combs
Gleam indolently drawn through perfumed tresses—
Than those swans loitered; tell me! had thy guesses
Soared trembling towards Olympus, wonder-eyed?

Frail though the empyrean, hadst thou sent
Some fond surmise?
Or had conjecture, with mere swans content,
In fowler wise
Stolen on islet lone

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Girt with its bullrush zone?
Watched some proud mother warm her nest,
Or strike her tardy eggs?
Watched the soft cygnets quaintly test
Freedom on doubtful legs?
Watched, by an odd bright notion madly caught,
Stout babies break from shells,
And, hooded under fragile domes, make sport,
Like bees from flower bells?

Not virtues, that the sweetest sins forego,
Envy thee sadly; nay, thou dost not blanch
Their cheeks with base regret; for they can glow
With joy, to watch thee, on rose-laurel branch,
Hang thy gold belt of weight to stoop pink blooms
And make them kiss themselves in water glooms;
Thy royal robe against the trunk suspended,
Loose then thy locks and vests; for, these descended,
Thy beauty all the joy of light assumes:

Thou being hence, here, with enquiring hops
The robin ventures, perks with knowing look
His shrewd small eye, still draweth nigh, still stops;
Thy picture-broidered train might be a book,
And he a child enacting someone wise;
Soon hither, too, the bright kingfisher flies;

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His glance demands how gemmy-gauds are fashioned;
On thy return both vanished;—then, impassioned,
Burst in the imperial swan with ardent eyes:

O beautiful white woman, that white bird,
Embraced ere long,
Made rapturous music and was nobly stirred
To wondrous song;
Note surging through his throat
On modulated note,—
Sounds unsealing worlds of bliss,
Dream-hallowed, sunset-flushed,—
Sounds more melting than a kiss
Received on midnight hushed,—
Sounds that made thee know, Troy must be burned,
Helen be loved and blamed;
Ay, distant, 'neath thy closed lids, were discerned
Those shriek-pulsed towers that flamed:

Yet never, never, if the pain waxed shrewd
(Though in a vaster pleasure wholly merged)
Would thy great lover let remorse intrude
Upon that bliss, that like an anguish surged
Beneath his ardour, as beneath the blast
Swoll'n ocean in tall waves runs high and fast;
Oh, never had a pale regret permission

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To slow interpret to thy soul each vision
That flashed like summer lightning, flashed and past!

Forbidden loves are sweet to human hearts,
And, would but spare Necessity consent,
They might ennoble; sanction she imparts
Was ne'er to any other woman lent:
Thy heart alone felt shame dissolve away
In pleasure limpid as the dawn of day;
Beauty, unhumbled by the cold next morning,
Rash impulse thou createdst brought adorning
And like a bridegroom wrapped thee from dismay:

Delicious down of pulsing throat and breast
Thine arms have known;
Thy fanned heart all the power of wings confessed,
Wings that had flown
Where thy dazed thoughts ne'er dared;
In bliss then thine, hath shared
Strength, that had churned the river white
Behind the mightiest swan;
Strength, that was sudden like the light
That reddens day-break wan;
Strength thou couldst no more question or forbid,
Than struggle of thine might check
When, round thy shoulders, through thy tresses, glid
That amorous god-like neck.

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SUGGESTED BY THE REPRESENTATION ON A GRECIAN AMPHORA OF A WINGED AND ADOLESCENT EROS SEEKING TO CATCH A RABBIT IN A SCARF

Whirr! and the dread wings flap;
Scamper! the rabbit flies
Down the branched lanes like a streak!
Eyes he but the prickly hoops,
In covert furze some tunnelled gap,
He hears those pinions flap
As they poise that trenchant beak;
In his heart the venture dies,
And headlong on he flies,—
Bolts, and the buzzard stoops,
Swerves, and the buzzard swoops,
Checks, and those dark wings flap.

Swift in the liquid light,
Steering between the furze,
Down the rough and hummocked slopes,
Skirting briery clumps of fern,
Brown and red-brown and jetty bright,
With dire reserve of might
Tracking those panic hopes,
Forward the buzzard skirrs,
Intently threads the furze,
Veers with the rabbit's turn,

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Dogs, and keeps close astern,
Cheered by that reckless flight.

Love, on like wings, in chase
Held a like timid harmless prey;—
Young, in his teens, with beardless face,
His body lithe, direct and slant
And smooth as the glossy rich display
On arrowy buzzard's form;—but Love,
Sailing the warren close above,
The white-tailed scurryer all apant
Sought not with talon or with beak
To strike, but in a scarf did seek
To trap his timid quarry;
And after helter-skelter race,
In victory did close the chase,
And caught his panting quarry.

—Not as when plunged beak joys
Eyeless the rabbit bleeds,
While his quivering ends in death;
When detaches here and there
The handsome bird a morsel choice;
When a strange proud noise
Making, at times he heeds
The distance, where the breath

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Of August stirs the heath;
Dreams, and is keen and fair,
And as that desert air
Seems staidly to rejoice:—

Love with soft silk doth blind
His prey, and thus transports
Far to hutch of white pine wood
Closed by latch of orichalch,
A hutch where he shall to his mind
Straw, oats, and parsley find
And gaze o'er templed courts
Round which doves coo and brood,
Where in their tender mood
White-handed Graces walk,
Pause, stroke his fur and talk
To him with voices kind.

Soul, thou art caught by Love
After such chase, such pangs; so blind
With darkness round, beneath, above,
Transported to like quiet shrine;
Which far more wondrous thou shalt find
Than freedom's rugged wilderness.
There thou may'st watch in dainty dress
Virtues and Graces that combine,

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Not only with soft-sounding word,
But converse understood when heard,
To raise thee up to glory;
And, if thou follow as they lead,
Their patience will ere long indeed
Have raised thee nigh to glory.

Taught are the wild and free,
The warren is their school;
Hazard, fate, the hawk, mishap
Teach them, bringing home the truth;
Death at their doors they daily see,
They learn or cease to be:
Such as do never nap
Grow old and strong and rule:
They dub who is caught a fool,
Age and forget their youth,
Hold, though with scanty proof,
Their life the best that may be.

Love, and they see thee too!
Flee from thee, crouch or hide!
Beauty, youth and power and joy,
Golden curls that please the winds,
Naked perfection, wings that outdo
In power the kite's, in hue

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The Halcyon's! Their minds
Are Fear's, not theirs—they hide
From eyes, in which to confide
Meaneth life shall be joy!
They see thee, half man, half boy,
Unbewitched they thy beauty view

Thy house they have never seen:
Its covered courts are paved with tiles,
The open ones with grass are green;
While, indoor water's channell'd speech
The music-loving ear beguiles.
Psyche, thy bride, thy sisters three,
The Graces and that mother of thee,
Beauty divine,—these all and each,
With the seven kirtled Virtues, tell
(Holding the rapt soul in a spell)
Thy captives many a story
Of great example and great grace—
Of lovers, who all fear did face,
And died, but live in story.

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A LAMENT FOR ORPHEUS

This is his head, O women; see these lips
Still now for ever,—
Lips, that persistently were dumb so long,
And, pinched together,
Refused our supplication that sweet song,
Which, in days never to return, did charm
Gaunt oaks of stubborn growth, stooping to hearken;
And pines, whose tall throngs earnest broodings darken,
Of their austere aloofness did disarm;
While every savage dweller in the forest,
(Like moon-struck lovers when their pain is sorest)
Followed him gentle, followed him in tears;
Lions with shaggy mane brushed past his knees;
And leopards silent paced with spell-bound ears,
And eyes that could not from fond worship cease;
With honey-loving tongue huge bears caressed
His white unsandalled feet,
Which trod those paths our childhood followed in,
Drawn on by reverence meet.
So well the aim of living he expressed,
His lute such escort everywhere could win.

O women, look; I part these heavy curls,
To show ye those fair portals where our prayers
Clamoured in vain; these blood-damped heavy curls,

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To show ye shell-like mouldings, where, fond girls,
Your love was foiled and fainted;
Oh, with his soon-to-wither beauty, now
Be thoroughly acquainted
While yet Death opportunity allow!
Brief, brief, the stay of sweet looks after death!
See, see, how thickly
The blood drops from the severed neck beneath,
While cheeks, waned sickly,
Foretell a ghastness which we dare not face.
Fast closes in our fortune's narrow space;
Yea, all our fortune rests with this pale mien,
Austere no longer,
Where sorrow fenced herself, and brooding teen
Than life's hope stronger:
As rock, ringed by fair flowers, harsh and stern,
Such marble grief dismayed our blushful leaguer
Who camped about his feet, frail, wistful, eager,
And, hearkening, mute like flowers, could discern
A sound of tears within his riven frame.

He inly wept and heeded not our woe;
His heart was weeping:
Like shadows of swift birds that passed above,
Or thoughts expressed from under features sleeping,
His sighs across our smiling patience came,

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Or, traversing our hearts, confused our lips;
Meanwhile, from all and each youth's glory slips,
Unheeded melts, as from bloom's petalled head
Its diadem of dew; or idly drips,
Spilled out from languid chalices of gold.
Was his heart cold?
We never dreamed it: no, he loved the dead,
Preferred her to the living; and was live
As is the ash-heap's treasured core of red,
Which waits all day the wood-cutter's return
Within his hut, and, when he fans, will burn
And make his cabin glow, his comfort thrive;
So shall, life's day once closed, that long-mourned love
Find her lost comfort cheer the night below:
"Eurydice" we heard him sigh her name;
It sought the soft vast dome of blue above
Dove-winged, but shadowed us with raven woe.

Then from our smouldering hearts leaped forth the flame;
Who knows what far-off echoes heard our cries,
And mocked them round their lonesome upland glen,
Repeating yells of frenzy, thinned in tone,
From passive wall to passive wall of stone?
Who knows what leisured eagles, through the skies,
In idle wonder, quit rock perches then?—
O Zeus, that madest, hast thou seen thy work

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Mar its own beauty, ignorantly, blindly,
Untaught, unwarned, unreasoned with, unkindly
Dowered with liberty? or dost thou shirk
All care and thy deed's outcome leave to fate?
Or is our weakness tortured by thy hate?—

As the wind takes the forest, passion took
Our arms and hair, and all our being shook:
Like ships that, at the flood-tide, from their ranks
A tempest launches off steep shingle banks,
Sails drenched and water-logged,
We heaved upon the swell of black emotion,
At mercy of a rude remorseless ocean.
Like swimmers, seaweed-clogged,
Then felt our beauty fail and overstrain;
Our grace and our resistance were annulled:
Our souls like bind-weed bells, draggled with rain,
Swung to the blast,
The glory of white youth completely dulled,
Forever past.

This river seeks eternally the sea,
As youth unwitting to salt sorrow flows.—
Bright waves, whose keen pursuit of destiny
Draws all our bloodstained thoughts the way it goes,
Accept of what bereaves us, this fair head:
We overdrove our hopes and weep them dead.—

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We murdered him, O women, and our guilt
Is, as the ravenous sea, insatiate;
All our good will to come, all thoughts elate
Shall be as jars of honey vainly spilt,
To sweeten that salt main.

Down, down this stream, speed on, thou fair head, floating
Past iris beds and king-cups less worth noting
Than were our smiles; retain
That cold indifferent aspect, those drooped lids
Where'er thou wendest; whether Nereus bids
Thee welcome, o'er some jasper threshold borne;
Or lank and shipwrecked sailors, under crags
Crouched round their drift-wood blaze, behold
Thy beauty up-turned in the surf forlorn;
Or, thou (where, fishing over billows grey,
On pinion slow, some lonely seamew lags
Till the moon rise) athwart the wan ray rolled,
To feast on thee, her weary wings upfold;—
Nay, rather, to brown-footed fisher maiden
Shall soft foam sweep up whispering, with thee laden,
And thy face meet with innocent tears at last.
Our part with thee is played and of the past;
Nor is there rugged darkness deep in caves,
Wherein the life of youth-resembling waves
Is broken, half so cruel as the thought
That our hearts loathe the deed our hands have wrought.

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That noble stag, the leader of the herd,
Lies pierced upon the heights:
Who, then, can say a word?—
Let dumb does cry, let frail fawns bleat, since night's
Un-eared, responseless silence wounds them not:
Have they conceived of *Pity* to improve their lot?

How are the mighty fallen? by what chance?
Where now is honour gone?
O tell it not in Gath! Publish it not
In streets of Askelon!
Lest daughters of the Philistine rejoice,
Lest they for gladness dance
(The daughters of uncircumcised men),
And give their triumph voice:
Who could bear comfort then?

O let there not on you be dew again,
Ye mountains of Gilboa. No;
Never let there be rain
Upon your lofty fields, where yearly go
Tribes purified, and there a clamour raise
Around the sacrifice, undaunted praise
That need not stint to shout:—it shall be so
No more; for there
The mighty left their shields—for there, alas,

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The shield of Saul was vilely cast away,
As though he ne'er
Had been with oil anointed:—nay,
Let spring there no more grass;
Suffer not there to fall
By night the dew, nor any rain by day;
There let no flocks or shepherds henceforth stray:
But be they barren all,
Thy tops, Gilboa, mournful and not gay:—
Who shall praise beauty now, since this has come to pass?

Never the bow of Jonathan grew slack,
Never the sword of Saul was carried back
Save crimsoned with the blood of foes left dead,
Save on the flesh of warriors fully fed:
Yet, in one day, both son and father perished!—
Saul was, of Jonathan, beloved and cherished;
Division had no portion in their lives
And found none in their death: less honour strives,
Less honour: both were lovely, both are dead.

Oh pleasant in their lives, lovely were they!
More rapid were they than grown eagles—yea,
Stronger were they than lions!—Maidens all,
Daughters of Israël, weep ye for Saul!
For he it was who clothed you, from of old,

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In scarlet with other delights.
Had your apparel ornaments of gold?
They were won from armed Canaanites.—
Lament ye, weep, and wail;
What sweet word addeth comfort to a tale
Which speechlessly tears can tell:
Though the shedding of tears it is well,
Yet, O ye maidens, let it not be all;
Sing with your loftiest passion songs for Saul.

How have the mighty fallen!—At what place
Did they from out the battle drop? Tell me,
Doth Jonathan lie pierced upon the hills?
Come, lead me thither, I would see his face,
E'en add one other evil to my ills.—

Ah! this indeed is he!

I am distressed for thy sake, O my brother;
Thou, Jonathan, hast more than any other
Been pleasant unto me:
What is left to *me* then?
Wonderful love was thine,
Passing that of women even,
And all that love was mine.
Who loving after this shall deem he doeth well?

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Who knoweth who rejoiced when my love stricken fell?

How are the mighty fallen! How are they broken,
Those swords of the battle!—Rend we for a token
Our garments, cast dust on each head for a sign
That they are dead, that even those have perished
Whom most our hearts had cherished.—
Ah God, whose god seems strongest to the Philistine?

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ON DEATH

Why question what my thoughts of death may be?
Behold 'tis Autumn—in yon poplar mass,
Whose green ripples to silver breezily,
Dangle pale yellow leaves like lemons large;
And lo! beyond there! what has come to pass?
Suave haze and sunshine from its utmost marge
Have taken London to their mighty keeping,
Which, self-forgetful, smiles in glory sleeping:
And here hath she flown down whom children charge
"Fly away home"—and busily is creeping
A scurrying carnelian on my sleeve.—
O Lady-bird, begone;
We men forebode; stay, thou wilt ne'er believe,
Nor spoil glad hours whilst yet their sands run on.

Self-questioned ignorance yields no reply;
And thus there grows an aching in our ear
Which stir of insect wings can magnify
And hear whole flights of angels oar their vans—
Nothing is silent when the heart will hear;
All echoes, answers; yet the thought is man's,
Not a new thought, brings not new knowledge, never
Breaks on the silence where his brain dwells ever,
Nor peoples that vast night the mind's eye scans,
Nor can prized beauties from what pains love sever.—

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Wise, heartless, Lady Bird, hear thou, thy home
Is burnt, thy children flown;
Yet be not less industrious to roam
The infant's hand, who makes such harsh things known.

When to the mightiest man death did draw near,
He shut himself within his bathing hall
And lent to his great admiral his ear;
Who told of voyage on the Indian main,
The first by Grecian captains dared—that all
The glamour of unconquered seas might reign
Over the greatest conqueror's spirit failing.
By the bath-side, he, picturing them sailing,
Was as he had been in his youth again,
Conversed of conquest nigh as when unailing,
And pleased his captains; yet grew worse once more,
Soon in a deep trance sank;
His anxious Macedonians at the door,
Then would not be gainsaid, but, rank by rank,

In single file, were ushered past his bed.
His Indian and Egyptian veterans
Passed mute, were satisfied he was not dead;
Unarmed they passed and many a tear let fall;
Man, he had won more than had erst been man's
Till each owned him the embodied soul of all:—

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And lo! they saw him vanquished, helpless, dying;
So childishly their hearts were in them crying.
He no more moved, nor for one friend did call,
Yet two days lay, as all had seen him lying;
Then on the tenth day of his fever, on
The twenty-eighth of June,
Died; and from what vast schemes the life was gone,
Which up and down far lands like wrecks lay strewn!

His end was beautiful, though from vile cause—
A surfeit at a feast—his fever came.
Alaric's grave likewise commands applause
Though he sacked Rome and Italy trod under:
His captives, by those careful of his fame,
Were forced to turn Calabrian torrent's thunder
And in the dry bed delve a sepulchre,
And house his trophies and his ashes there:
But when the stream, which their hard toil did sunder,
Resumed his haughty course, then all they were
Slaughtered in thousands on his rocky shores,
That what they knew might be
Kept by their lips, as by his thund'rous roar's
Blank bellow, secret to eternity.

"The morning after Goethe's death I yearned
To look upon his well-known form once more."

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So writes that friend who to his house returned.
"Stretched on his back he seemed to sleep, while, fraught
With peace, profound security reigned o'er
His mien: that grand brow still might harbour thought!
By one white sheet the naked form was hidden:
Large lumps of ice lay round it; then, unbidden,
His man the linen from the body caught,
And laid bare what since eighty years was hidden;
I was astounded—so magnificent
The limbs, the breast's broad slant
Was arched and powerful, the arms and thighs unspent
And muscular, the feet were elegant!

Nowhere was any trace of fat, and none
Of leanness or decay; a perfect man
In all his beauty lay before me; one
Moment, enraptured at the sight, might I
Forget that blood therein no longer ran:
And on his breast my thoughtless hand might lie
Ere me to horror stillness could awaken;
But then I turned away, by sobs rude-shaken,
And gave free course to tears." Ah, wrought so high,
We, our revered or cherished from us taken,
By eloquent grief's passion rapt, may deem
That beauty finds in death
Merest defeat; yet sometimes tombs will seem

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To echo angel voices, hoard swung-censer's breath.

'Tis known how on her bridal morn one died;
Greatly beloved, most beautiful and young,
She lay there; on the white quilt in their pride
Flowers were strewn, fresh opened, scented, glowing!
Purple anemones together flung
With crimson pheasant-eyes; one hand unknowing
Oppressed green mignonette; the other fern
Embowered; near, forget-me-nots did yearn
Neath poppies crushed; like mimic sconces blowing,
Orange set her brow round with lamps to burn.
While, stricken, her poor bridegroom, hour by hour,
Tear-blind, stared at her face.
Yet calmed by beauty, awed by sovran power,
One could have thanked death, though one dared not praise.

Such scenes concern but us who linger here;
What their own death was to themselves none knows.
Heard they our wailing, as the insect's ear
Lists to the children's chaunt, a mere vague sound,
While calmly she, since life within her glows,
Is on her present occupation bound?
Though all death's dreaded pain and hoped-for glory
Be nursed of us as children hug a story,
E'en croon one o'er the beetle they have found,

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(Fair lie old snows upon the mountains hoary)
Imagination must teach us to die,
Must age and death enhance
And give to both a value clear and high :—
Or fail and leave us to blank ignorance.

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TO LOKI

Cease, thou art terrible! Cease, thou tireless god;
No purpose doth thy crude, brief laugh declare;
Thy beauty charms the less, for being odd;
Thy skin is bronzed, like red flame flaps thy hair:
Shalt thou attract the would-be-self-possessed?
Oh, thou art young forever, there it lies;
Bewilder me forever with thy mocking eyes!

Thrall me! what though thy laugh ring hollow? Stay
Those limbs from dancing! Hover lower,
From off those sulphurous rocks thy feet leave grey
In spots like aged lichen patches! Slower;
Mine eyes ache following thy yellow vest
Which crisps and curdles round hips, neck and shoulder
While, lightning-like, it streams from boulder top to boulder!

—Leaps as, from desert snow,
That ice-plough cleaves beneath the spangled night,
When clearest wind doth blow,
Flash and fly up those brandished spears of light,—
They hopping twang or crack with zest,
While the white bear facing north,
The silken blue-fox stealing forth,
Blinking seal in furry vest,
And the thick muffled Laplander,
Gaze and wonder at the stir!

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Is it happy warriors dancing,
Fire-light on their gay spears glancing?
Is it gods, or demon sprites,
Or shooting thoughts of summer nights,
Like pangs that torpid flesh contains,
Thrilling Winter's ice-locked brains?
No, for it is thee and thine,
Who plans of men and gods do plot to countermine.

Volcanic nature, passionless desire,
Divine mobility, intuitive
Touchstone of qualities,—enter, thou Fire,
Enter our life once more,—force us to live!
May I encounter thee in some long lane,
A gipsy with stained garments on thy back,
With toys and charms, and songs bedizening thy pack!

Let weeds with wicked smells, as fumitory,
Make smart the shattered ruin of thy hat;
And, volubly persistent with thy story,
Trap me with hints, and like a wary cat
Let me believe escape were not in vain;
Then make me feel, how fond man's thought to rest
When none but active thought fulfils the soul's behest;

And of that ship tell me
Which storms, which fogs, which calms, which bergs of ice,

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No danger of the sea,
Can wholly wreck; that still its voyage plies,
Righted, after each mischance,
By an old but nimble crew,
Lovers of green, salt, and blue,
That have oft, with fiery glance,
Watched the ice-floe's closing jars,
And have steered by astral stars,
Known Newfoundland's milk-white gloom,
Mirage through hot hazes loom,
Noontide darked by clouds of birds
And large fishes utter words.
Garbs of many climes they wear,
Hoary unkempt beards and hair,
Wiry comrades proved of thine
Dauntless like thee, though old, they have like eyes that shine.

Life is not vain, I know it; I am thine,
O Loki, thine to teach or to betray;
Thy treacheries are punishments condign:
Cheat me, and laugh; be cruel the god's way;
Get hungry lips with vivid truth-like lies,
Then grant them speech with lords and harlots grand;
Whose hearts shall faint and leap like birds held in the hand!

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Than pity more sensitive to bridle thought!
No eyes, like thine, foresee the course of Change,
As, step by step, with Time, followed by nought,
She passes, and still is: endlessly strange,
Enamouring speech until with thee it vies,
Thou patronizest thieves who keep their bad lives jolly,
And wags who pilfer seers, in wisdom to deck folly.

Content thou dost abhor:
The gods were happy once, and joyed their fill;
Those days on thee lay sore;
Thou lovely Balder by their hands didst kill.
Beauty to win back from Death,
Sadly turned they then to toil,
Labourers in obdurate soil;
But more freely came thy breath,
And more nimbly worked thy wit;
Oftener then, thy travel kit
Donned, thou wentest singing forth,
East, or west, or south, or north;
Every homestead knew thee then,
Humoured, railed upon, by men,
Mischievous Lob, or lanthorn Jack,
Fiend upon the grumbler's back,
Thou wast ours; but we are thine
By halves at most, ha ha! Thou art but half divine!

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Ah, when a fair day finds me cold to it
Who should be friendlier far,
Or when the night seems too august, so lit
With tranquil star on star;

They ban unworthy every thought of mine,
That once seemed symbols meant
To help my sense express my soul and shine
Equal to that event

Which any hour creation thrusts on man,
Who inattentive, weak,
Feels the vast spectacle surpass his will
Which would respond to it, and sometimes can
Find thoughts as grand, as beautiful, and fill
As though a voice did speak
Ocean, sky, cloud-land, valley, plain and hill;

Then, then, abhorrent, wasted human life,
All life of beast and pest
Maintained by rapine, lust, and strife,
I hate and would arrest:

Stay thou to multiply thy cruel wealth;
And cease thou to cajole,

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Stealing from that young girl her thoughtless health,
Her joy and self-control;

Thou tiger, leave defenceless herds alone;
Thou shark, submit to law;
'Tis your example circumscribes my thought.
Collusion with your ruthless greed has thrown
So strong a spell that now my mind is brought
To horror down from awe,
And all I find doth mock all I have sought.

Oh, it is nothing that a day is fair,
If life cannot be sweet!
If souls cannot be lovers, and if care
School not desire's feet!

If always generations generations breed,
And race give place to race
Sapped by inadequacy, doomed to bleed
And, dying, pine for grace!

Only if fact can answer reason's prayer
Both in one life and all,
And in resultant beauty souls be good;
Only if towards that goal each day we fare,
And never stand below where we have stood

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Answer I to your call,
Ye stars, or yours, ye flowers of field and wood.

Yet is all vain? vain then this sad surmise;
For still unknown our doom;
Yet we have fancies, can enchant our eyes,
Paint bliss upon the gloom;

We have some strength, though it be not enough
The vast whole to transform;
It can spread lawns where yet the waste is rough,
Some blossom shield from storm;

Our strength can make fair skies its harvest fields,
And glean from cloud and star;
The grace of trees, the calm of distant hills
Garner, and add what every flower yields
To feed a beauty and a light that fills
Our eyes, when those eyes are
Glad to see other eyes forget life's ills.

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TO MY WIFE

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Needless it is, or should be, to tell how Psyche grew up more beautiful than Aphrodite; who, being wrought to jealousy, sent forth her son, Love, that he might kindle the girl's heart with unnatural passion for some base object: and how he himself was smitten, and in order to fulfil his desire delivered deceitful oracles to the king, her father; so that he had her exposed upon a funeral pile in a desert mountain place, there to await fire from heaven. Yet thence she was by Zephyr conveyed to Love's own Palace, where for a time she dwelt ignorantly happy; since Love availed himself of the night that she might not know her lord, and bade invisible ministrants attend on her by day. Nathless erelong her elder sisters discovered her retreat and, moved by envy, poisoned her mind with monstrous suspicion, so that she thought it possible that not a god but a frightful dragon frequented her bed. Then, disobeying her lord's most express injunction, she, when he was asleep, took a lamp, viewed him and, trying his arrows' sharpness on her thumb, started to see blood; when burning oil from the shaken lamp was spilled upon the delicious and slumbering divinity which but three seconds before had been revealed to her eyes. He, waking, with the intolerant severity of young and ardent natures, reproved her fault and quitted her; flying up, though she clung to his legs, though her weak arms

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yielded, though she fell; flying always higher, he preached to her of disobedience from a tall tree's top, and then betook himself to heaven. She, humbled, with a heart more broken than her body, sought a stream and cast herself therein.

These things the old tale telleth: but after this, though it may have recounted nothing false, it surely hath not remembered the whole truth. Not for love of Love that water saved her; nor was her encounter with Pan so meagre. No; for when the time was fully come, the memory of these things and the full significance of her after wanderings was rekindled. Yet if so much escaped the puissant art of days which gave birth to that old tale, how shall it be told to-day? Though it have again burdened a man's mind, how shall it be delivered? Help, O patient Reader; and, though the attention called for be strained and painful, out of pity and to nourish a hope all-orphaned in this adverse age, listen and pardon, listen and help the straitened verse for that old tale's sake.

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PAN'S PROPHECY

Herein Pan, singing to himself, useth the speech of men to delight his heart.

I am old and wise and strong,
Hale, and still inclined to song;
And the morning I salute
Loud upon my oaten flute;
Then, ardent o'er my ranked pipes bending,
Match the sky-lark's song ascending;
With pursed lips hovering o'er each reed,
From deep to treble on I speed,
And surprise him in the blue
With earth-born echo clear and true.
And sometimes, when the rustling breeze
Draws hints of music from the trees,
I nurse and fondle their beginning,
Chord to mate with chord still winning,
Rearing the infant tune to express
All a dryad's happiness.

Hereafter he toucheth upon several springs of joy and showeth how they are welcome to favourite moods.

Next bend mine eyes to worship flowers;
This tip-toe on a slim stalk towers,
Pride at one with innocence
Like a child in a new wimple;
This other, under leafage dense,
Sure of being searched for, simple
Yet counting upon beauty's power,
Content to wait its triumph's hour.
How the gracious ferns expand

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Like a sleeping infant's hand!
And their growth acquires greatness
As a boy-king's soul sedateness.
For them, belike, the trees are gods,
Whom they wonder of and trust,
And augur from their drowsy nods
Till the autumn, when they rust;
Their glades then gorgeous to behold,
Complain they that their age grows cold?
Sometimes, forgetful of the world,
At eve o'er inward fragrance curled,
Rapt, as night-long the primrose is,
To brood apart . . . . .
[Suddenly he breaketh off, his attention being called away to something that is passing at a short distance from where he is. He proceedeth to describe what taketh place, asking his heart to assure him if he divineth of the occurrence aright.]
Ha! is this
A naiad, my heart?
As beautiful! as naked!
Divine from the stream's
Deep pools she wades through pebbled shallows,
And holds her brow as though it achéd,
And half asleep, still seems
As one from dread dreams wakéd?

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And, clutching stalks of stalwart mallows,
Climbs now the thymy bank, and sitting,
Her feet among forget-me-nots,
Weeps into both her hands, my heart?
[His heart respondeth.]
O Pan, why has she left her silvern grots?
Being both wise and old, it seems but fitting
Thou didst approach and ask whereof her moan.
Thy youth, at times, found words strike hard as stone;
Thy age to comfort maidens thence hath art:
For safely age sets free a tangled dove;
Which youth attempting round himself soon knots
The thousand-meshed calamity of love.
[He rejoineth.]
Steal we then gently through the king-cup plots
And down the cresséd margent of the stream,
Silently helped by the slant willow stumps,
Leaning on mosséd stools of root and stone
And planting hoofs in thick of lush-grown clumps;
Ask her, unscared, whereof is her sad moan,
And whether she has dreamt the drowner's dream
Under cold waters cruel to her brows
With all the shrewdness of their icy clearness,
Or whether she hath to his wattled house
Followed young Daphnis, weighed his Chloe's dearness,
And all forlorn re-sought the waterfall,

Herein his heart intimateth that pity is not unfrequently the father of luckless love in youthful hearts, though age need have no fear.

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Porch-curtain to her aching silver hall.
[Thus communing with his heart as with a friend, he hath drawn near, and now silently approacheth close to the poor half-drowned and weeping girl.]
Sob, sob no more; confide thy sorrow, maiden,
To one whose wise and agéd heart is laden
With echoes of all griefs that country folk
Have felt and shuddered under, wailed and fallen,
Of Pan's peace which is felt to preside over the recurrence of summer and winter, day and night, yielding an inspiration to constancy and endurance.
Then from my quiet learned to bear the yoke,
And once more risen. Ofttimes nymph or faun
To tell of their heart-breaking disappointments
Seeketh me in the lone mid-forest lawn;
Or with torn flesh, sprained joints, requiring ointments,
Fainting, will reach my hill-crest cave at dawn.
[The girl, who was shaken on first hearing the voice of Pan, without looking up or giving respite to her tears, now sobbeth:]
What voice did start me thus with sudden nearness?
Ah, who is this doth question of my woe?
PAN
Herein he supposeth that she hath but hardly escaped from the agony of those who drown.
In kind tones questions with a cordial will:
Hast thou been saved, while drowning in the clearness
Of some cold silent pool,—but saved so late
That all the painful crowded vision still,
And recent horror of the all-sundering throe,
Oppresseth nigh to bursting thy sick brain?

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Ah, speech may give relief to such a pain;
And converse will that agony abate.

THE GIRL

Kind tones and gentle words I thank thee for:
Thy guess is naught to that which I deplore.

She denieth knowledge of those extremities

PAN

If it do vex thee hearing wrong surmise,
Remove thy hands, let gaze into thine eyes
Mine, now so aged and wise that they can read
Clear in another's, why her heart doth bleed.

He will have it that though he may have read exterior signs amiss, the heart is an open book to him.

THE GIRL

This might be of such griefs as oft are borne,
But mine has never been before this morn;
Yesterday knew it not, no previous day
Shed light on things like those mine eyes have seen,
Or mocked as this day mocks—it hath not been!

The woe inscribed on her heart is too little common to be deciphered by experience.

PAN

My wisdom was not gathered in men's homes,
And is not based on what they do or say
With greatest frequency or likelihood:
Bees are wise too,—behold their honeycombs;
And gods so wise they grant what good men pray:
Man's learning did not make the sky props good:
And mine was gleaned from many a summer's mood;
Sad evening taught me, and the drear wet day,
And pining winter's sudden radiancy,

He hath not learned alone from man but likewise from nature.

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After the snow fall, hath shown truth to me.

THE GIRL

Her woe hath naught in common with the nightfall and the year's close.

I cannot think, the evening or the snow
Have e'er revealed the secrets of my woe.

PAN

He protesteth a richness in his nature neither native nor acquired, but given by an unknown hand.

Nay, but the power to read, the power to heal,
These are not learned or fostered; these reveal
A donor unsuspected; these may gauge
The rarest sorrow, and thy grief assuage.

THE GIRL

She however hath experienced that what we think the gods have given, often is not really ours.

Ah, if thou deem'st thy dower to be divine,
Know that that fond vain dream has once been mine!
Who dreamed the gods had crowned with happiness
Her days forever—witness my distress!

PAN

He argueth no more, but will have her throw off dejection, and goadeth her to shame.

Look, oh, for comfort, look into mine eyes!
Though hopeless, look! for in an effort lies
Healing; adventure to the soul means strength
Renewed; and woe that would be of a length
With endless time is pride in black disguise.

THE GIRL

She retorteth as stung by injustice.

I am not pride; that piteous earth am I
Spurned by his feet, when last he leaped the clouds.

PAN

He, taking advantage of her more active mood, proceedeth to music.

Hark, with soft strains of music let me try
To raise that pall despair, wherein woe shrouds

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Her shrinking, tender as an infant's eye.
[He playeth, and slowly she raiseth her eyes to fix them on his; he ceaseth to play and after a pause, behold! he prophesieth:]
Thou, thou art Psyche, chosen spouse of Love!
A perfect beauty, yet unfortunate bride!
For I will not, for all his yellow curls,
Or what, like music, through the eye doth glide,
His presence, which in golden vans he furls,
Sleek as a roosting dove,
To rest upon some bastion of white cloud—
No, not for these will I his faults condone:
Feverish and rash he is, and not alone
Blinded by mad desire, but far too proud.

Herein his inspiration alloweth her beauty to be perfect, but espieth a seed of misfortune in the seeming perfection of her husband.

Lorn, lorn, that lovely palace! lorn its courts
Deserted by thy joys! that knolléd park
With clumps of summer trees and browsing deer:
Its calm bright lakes, where downward thread the dark
Mute fish in golden shoals—deep waters clear,
Whose surface smooth reports
The viewless Zephyr as he comes and goes!
And, then, those jasmine arches overhead,
Where, underfoot, small curious shells are spread
Or lanes of herbs whence sweet aromas rose!

He proceedeth to deplore the forlorn palace that had been the home of their happiness.

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Were all these wanton? Was that house a toy?—
Mysterious with its unseen service rare,
Both prompt and exquisite to allay desire;
Its pure bath welled within a circular stair;
Those pillared sound-homes; the invisible choir,
That uttered a god's joy;—
Were these but a caprice, a season's whim?
And tangible, viewless, warm-vowed, secret, fond,
When to thy kiss Night rapturous did respond,—
That jealous coaxing husband? what of him?

He descrieth Love's shame in that he had not entrusted his spouse with the full significance of their bliss, but in the pride of his divinity held her humanity of no account.

A shame! fix shame upon him! let it burn!
He trusted not a beauty like his own!
No better than a mortal, wast thou not?
By gods to mortals little trust is shown;
They hide the more part, and most closely what
Doth mortals most concern.
Thou wast but a mere woman and thy grief
A woman's, not a nymph's e'en; for their tears
Are diamonds dissolved: salt-water clears—
Worthless though lavished—clears an amorous thief!

He would possess thee all in all; but thou—
His lighter hour and converse half asleep
Must make thy fortune, win thy gratitude!

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Why, many an upland boor that tendeth sheep
Is kindlier-hearted and hath grown more shrewd
In following his plough,
Than to expect the comforts of his house,
Or his wife's patience, for a lazy kiss;
But hearkeneth to her thought and shows her his:
Yet Love himself deceived his chosen spouse.

The rude herdsman showeth more sense in dealing with woman than this young god.

PSYCHE

Ah, now indeed I feel that thou art wise,
For other hearts thou readest as thine own.
That house, my heart could paint e'en as thou didst,
With its fair bath of circling steps of stone
Deep'ning till, for a round yard in the midst,
A tip-toe effort tries
In vain to keep nostril and mouth in air,
Till I perforce did make some feint to swim:—
And Love, most just is all thou saidst of him;
Laughing, he starved mine eyes and mocked my prayer!

She is persuaded of his wisdom because he hath told her all things that ever she did.

PAN

Ah! but take heed; too little trust was thine,
Unlovely sisters crediting, who told
Such hideous lies. Was this a fault so small,
Them to believe before Love's voice of gold,
Whose sound might prove its truth, most musical,
Most winsome, most divine?
Thou, Psyche, thou art also much to blame.

Not only her husband but she herself is to blame for believing the lies her sisters told rather than the midnight whispers of love.

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Was, then, the essence of thy joy so slight?
Naught written on thy heart as gods may write,
In large events, their purpose and their aim?

He reproacheth the little magnanimity of the soul with all evils sprung from wounded hearts, and asks whether love is a gift or merchandise that souls are so put about for an exact return.

Weep, weep; it is the poorness of the soul
That causeth heart-crossed and love-cankered fates.
Will one beg alms, because he friendship gives?
Demand return for love? When the soul mates
Is't but as when a merchant hopes he lives
Not worse, upon the whole,
Than those who have reaped honour from their pelf?
Is it but so? No deep intent to serve
Love-worthiness life-long, with every nerve?
Can love-struck heart belittle thus itself?

Action should proceed from the desire to increase good. Was not her action perverse then, attempted in order to prove that what seemed the greatest good was in truth an overwhelming evil.

Why could he not so trust thee as he should?
And thou, what didst thou hope for afterward,
With proof the best known to thee did proceed
From monster vile? Deeds with hoped good accord;
But what was there to follow from thy deed
At all resembling good?
What dreary future, with a past assured
That it had revelled being poison-fed?
What Psyche gazing on a dragon dead,
Remembering bliss in Love's own arms secured?

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Ah, was it life, or vengeance, prompted thee
To change such ecstasy for certain woe?
Know this, thou never shalt more sureness find
That aught which seemeth good is really so,
Than just that which exclaimeth in thy mind
"Good," feeling it to be;
No thought, no reason, and no evidence
Can ere avail to 'stablish thy delight;
If wrong, that canst thou not foresee; if right,
'Tis but thy rapture's lasting to thy sense.

He showeth that there can be no knowledge of good except the experience of joy in possessing it.

Though upon false occasion thou art pleased,
Thy pleasure ne'er to falsehood had recourse;
For visions, joy-inspiring, though revealed
By our mistaking, are our rapture's source.
In tasteless ambergris there lies concealed
Virtue, by which released
The savours of all other meats appear
Three times as strong, ten times as exquisite:
So souls to love befooled, strengthened by it,
Should grow elate, as good dreams good men cheer.

Illusion itself may be the source of real good and blessed memories be the heirs thereto.

When love has moved us, how we taste our life
And relish ten times more each common day!
A dream may feed the mind, delight the soul,
More than fair weather can, a friendlier way,

Good sprung from illusion is effective and may remain active after the illusion has been dispersed.

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And, surely as a lover doth console,
Remove the effects of strife;
For even a dream has lent us what we sought:
Which when the world presents and then withdraws,
The world, like a good dream, has given us cause
For thankfulness—days, weeks, with rapture fraught!

Let there then be praise; and what lauds are there not due from Psyche? As, after she had been led by an invisible herald down lanes of living herbs to the bathing hall of her palace park, and there floated entranced as in a dream, should she not now issue forth from those perfect days refreshed as then from the bath,—not letting present crosses overwhelm so glorious a past? For though now its glory be withdrawn, should it not still yield her both comfort and courage?

Yea, let men praise the gods and be rejoiced
To feast upon rich memories of worth!
Wrought inly to activity by Love,
In thee all excellence had conscious birth.
And earlier days and hopes how far above
Had raised thee, gentle voiced;
A summoner divine; who led thy soul,
Soft treading on live herbs which breathed forth scent,
Unto that bath, wherein thy pure form leant
Tranc'd like cut rose afloat in crystal bowl.

And, from the revelation made to thee,
Thy soul refreshed should have come forth still tranced;
What though the clumsy and fast-changing world
Withdrew its help?—no longer seemed enhanced,
A parent of thy bliss, but onward hurled
Into fresh crudity?
Must the soul's joy fade severed from its root
In this gross-seeming moil of grief and mirth?

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Had not thine innermost conceived all worth
But idly flowered without the strength for fruit?

Alas, alas, the search for love and friends
Is malady! for, if we are to cease,
No joint asseveration can avail:
Cry we 'forever' loud as heart may please,
The shade in hell is yet more thin and pale:
Nay, we know naught of ends;
But beauty, when we know, we love, and when
We love we hope: the thing revealed, and not
That form or face that did reveal, is what
The heart serves, though nine know it not in ten.

Cross circumstances should not be permitted to impose, since the soul serveth a conception which the world is powerless to take away.

When I was young, the laughter of the gods
Woke me to loneliness; they at their feast
Mocked at mine infant shape, so unlike theirs,
So unlike man's, and yet not like the beast
That thinks not on itself: as when wind stirs,
And this tree shakes, that nods,
So foreign seemed their laughter in mine ear.
Madness might seek for pity from such folk;
I sought not, ne'er have sought, but borne my yoke
And known myself, known them, without a fear.

His own bastard divinity, the laughing stock of the gods from the cradle, is cited; if any ever lacked love and sympathy surely it was he.

I learned no language, felt no need to learn,

Yet had he in silence and patience discovered the soul in all things and become the universal friend.

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No more than thou to guess that of the birds;
Slowly my thought was born, yet proved exact;
Betrayed by the conveniency of words
Are gods and men: when the mind grasps the fact,
Then, then the lips will burn;
And languages of trees, of gods, of men,
Are born at need. I can converse with all;
Scanning their nature's depths, what sounds will call
Things righted to each soul, I utter then.

Words have deluded her: only value dreamed or perceived by the soul is of account. For, though those deserving love live despised, obscure, that which they most truly are is adored; and, on the other hand, souls unworthy of love, though embraced rapturously, can never be the real objects of adoration which another is more worthy of.

By words which had no touch with truth thy soul
Has been led far astray. Think now and know!
Though, worthy love, we live unrecognised,
Contemned; yet what we are is loved; and, though
Much we be loved, that heart which holds us prized
Is not in our control,
If our desert be less, but rather serves,
All unbeknown, far-distant though it be,
Whatever soul doth answer perfectly
Unto its love, and vows we hear deserves.

PSYCHE

Humiliated Psyche supposeth her error to have lain in that fondness which conceived of Love as loving one so worthless as herself.

Ah, was mine error then to hold him close?
I thought thou thought'st he had been in the wrong,
But now, like him, thou set'st thyself to chide,
Justly, my wretched deeds: but not for long
Does the snapt stalk support the blossom's pride;

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No long time, when it snows,
The broom-brush fair endures to bow his head,
But crashes and falls down; no long time I
Will mock this beauty, having cause to die,
But in the stream lie down till I am dead.

PAN

Stay, stay! sun-dried thy locks crimple and twine;
The golden light has lured his rosy friend
From chilly ambush, and, were Eros here,
Suddenly in his arms thy woes would end:
Who is more worthy love than thou art, dear?
Then be sure love is thine.
If thy soul half surmise her beauty's worth,
Thou'lt listen while what new has dawned on me
I do relate; thou'lt flush with ecstasy
When I unfold the secret of thy birth.

Pan insisteth that such beauty as hers is ever worthy of love, and proceedeth to a new revelation.

Thou art not mortal; in the summer's dawn,
Thy mother plucking cowslips in the grass,
The thyme and grass of Enna blessed her feet;
Scarlet she wore, that ne'er from sight she pass
Of fond Demeter from her threshold seat,
E'en when on some far lawn;
And to the farthest had she strayed that day,
When she beheld the magic crocus spring,
And wild with joy could note no other thing;

She is the daughter of Persephone: this the old tale had let slip, and even the present poem cannot recount all; for much will remain which must indeed some day be told about what was said when she at last found her way down to the under-world where her mother reigneth queen.

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So Hades seized and bore her fast away,—

Down through the chasm'd rock, to his stern home:
And there she learned to love him, there she bore
A daughter violet-eyed; then to her thought
Returned her childhood, and the days before
She first trod asphodel—days when she sought
The lark's nest, or did roam
For flowers on the wide bush-studded hills;
She pitied then thy honey-coloured curls,
And deemed her present home no place for girls;
And musing by the Styx heard Enna's rills.

Thou, changeling, in a palace cradle laid,
A mortal nurse hath lulled thee with her song;
And thou hast been of many tears beguiled,
Seen death and kissed it, when they died who long
Had loved thee and had called thee their grandchild;
And thou hast been afraid,
And hast despaired, and sought death; but the tide
Treasured thee carefully unto this place,
Though, dazzled by the beauty of thy face,
Thy nature was by Eros undescried.

PSYCHE

She rejoiceth in immortality.

Ah, am I then as he is? Doth my flesh
Not need that change he said his heart once meant,

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But, since I disobeyed, meant not to give?
Ah, as the sun, and moon, and stars, unspent
While girls grow up and wither, shall I live
With beauty all as fresh
As Love's, whose eyes first waked on that grim earth
Before man yet had fire, or yet had felt
Kind joy; for, while upon the beach they knelt
To see his wave-borne mother, he had birth:

And even then he was as now a youth
Of ardent soul, loose curls, and radiant form;
And as his scorn half-pitying on me turned
E'en thus he gazed upon that umber swarm
Of cave-dwellers, who, sordid, naked, yearned
Among the rocks uncouth,
On unploughed heaths, an early world's bleak shore.—
Persephone? My mother? Love was blind!
How shall I find her? Him, how shall I find?
Seek him I will, and found leave him no more!

This young god, her husband, hath always been the same in rashness, despising mere human life.

PAN

Go forth; but know thy triple fate is this,
To be, as hell is, shunned and held in hate;
And to be weak, as mortals are, and weep;
And yet be loved, as heaven, as heaven, elate.
Thy mourning shall run out in joy as deep
As any ocean is.

He warneth her that not only joy but pains and weakness are to come. Love is also being taught by suffering to discern more truly the nature of that which he desireth.

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That heavenly husband suffers pain for thee;
While heady rashness from his brilliant gifts
Now in his heart stern passion fans and sifts.
His true child Joy born of thy womb shall be.

PSYCHE

I thank thee for thy gentle wisdom, Pan;
And for thy kindliness divine, how much
I thank thee! and no more will seek cold death;
For I perceive the stream's pure soul was such
As truly knew the nature of my breath,
And loved me better than
I hitherto have loved myself; but now,
Looking far forward toward those joys divine,
I seek my bridegroom, and no more repine,
Through rustling corn lands on where drear woods sough.

PAN

Hark, up by yonder copse thou'lt see a hut:
Within there hangs an ample cloak fur-lined;
Clothe there thy naked beauty: by the door
Tall buskins of a shepherdess thou'lt find:
Take thou her scrip and cates; she is not poor,
And leaves her door unshut.
At dawn I watched her hie o'er yon hill-crest.
Her flocks I'll bless, beyond what thou dost take.
Thou'lt see the road below thee skirt a lake;
Strike down the path, and joining it, turn west.

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PSYCHE

Farewell; when Love's kiss doth my fortunes heal
I will remember thee, and we'll devise
Some good gift for kind Pan. Sweet chance! behold!
A brooch still fastened to my hair; I twice
Or thrice have felt it pull or touch me cold;
'Twill pay for all I steal.

PAN

Farewell; if I know Phyllis, she will prize
Thy jewel o'er her cloak of rabbit-fur,
And all possessions else that 'long to her;
Its presence in her hair will light her eyes.

[Psyche wadeth across the stream and full oft she turneth to wave her hand toward Pan, both then and while climbing the grassy hill, and he as oft returneth her kind signal, though pursuing, in subdued tones, his own sad thoughts, which to behold so much beauty leaving him had naturally raised.]

Oh, easy to the mind
Of god and man! easy, and fraught with bliss
And energy, is this—
To perceive the truth and be no longer blind!
With springing step, elate
As hers, they hasten, as she hastes away,
And have no care to stay
Anear the living source that their late gloom

He perceiveth that though she hath recognized the truth she needeth to remain with him in order to make its fulness hers. But the soul that catcheth sight of truth is ever thus impatient to set forth, confident in its present resources, though they must needs fail if no source of replenishment be frequented.

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Dispelled; so, from the tomb,
Souls fleet down the return-forbidding strait.
Yet, thou, O liberating Truth,
Art e'en as the fine bloom of youth,
Or waters of pellucid springs
On which the attempt to hoard them brings
A change; for in the earthen jar,
After a week, how dull they are!
Tainted, and shunable as those
Who seek to arrest youth's happy rose,
Beyond its season's kindly hour!
Ay! thus from truths reveal'd the power
Which once we thought forever ours,
Lies at length, like some spent flower's
Seared petals choking its green leaves,
About the heart that, stifling, heaves.

Yea, kiss thy hand, sweet soul and good,
Then turn the corner of the wood:
'Tis done, and thou art hid from view.
Who knoweth all that once they knew?
To suffer loss e'en while we gain,
While hope's proud wings beat down our pain,
Then all at once to find them fail
And, pitying, o'er our past to quail,
Stands in the record of the mind

Knowledge is lost as well as gained in the common course of life.

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A fate as common as unkind!

Thou wilt I know ere long forget
My words, and wilt their import let
Slip in the tumult of thy hope;
Nor can our tortured spirits cope,
Under the stress of bliss deferred,
And tantalized by things unheard
Which are unto our ardours dearer
Than the, albeit surer, nearer
Events, in which they do not live,
But like one drowning struggle with.

Psyche will half forget and then doubt what she now calleth knowledge; nor can it be otherwise while the spirit is goaded to impatience by bliss deferred.

Ignorance will succeed to doubt,
As thy unrest doth go about
To prove what once seemed clear, a dream;
And fear's white ash o'er every gleam
Of the live coal will softly flake
Till all thy being cold doth ache;
Thy mother then thou'lt seek in dread
As one but anxious to be dead.

Lastly she will find her mother when looking only for death.

Yet I, who know thy crowning bliss,
Will not be overcast by this;
But to my wonted haunts repair
And drink the wild-rose-perfum'd air,

Yet Pan can rejoice in knowledge and in the friendship of such strenuous nymphs as are vanquishers of every difficulty while they find in appropriate activity the renewal of their beauty and happiness.

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Or climb yon ridge to taste the breeze
Still faintly salt from far-off seas ;
Then gather fir-cones in the wood
To make my cavern hearth smell good,
That those far-sighted nymphs who climb
The mountains, in the winter time,
When long night through the rough winds blow,
May come to warm them at its glow,
And tell what eyes so blue and keen
Upon the distant roads have seen,
And how belike two neighbouring kings
Will wage a war, with other things
Which they have learned from birds that go
From land to land and on the snow
Fall o'er-wearied and a-cold ;
These to their bosoms they will hold
Until revived the songster sings
Of far-off lands, then spreads his wings
And leaves them happier than they were,
And even as happier yet more fair.

xxx.

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HERE ENDS PAN'S PROPHECY. PRINTED BY R. FOLKARD AND SON, XXII DEVONSHIRE STREET, QUEEN SQUARE, BLOOMSBURY, FOR DUCKWORTH AND CO., III HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON, W.C. MDCCCCIV.

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THE ROUT OF THE AMAZONS

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THE · ROUT · OF · THE · AMAZONS
BY · T. · STURGE · MOORE

DUCKWORTH · AND · CO.
LONDON · MDCCCCIII

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TO MY MOTHER

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THE ROUT OF THE AMAZONS

[At Laomedon's Upper Fold.]

FAUN [afar off]

Ahi, ahi, ahi, Laomedon!

LAOMEDON

It is the faun: he is in sore dismay:
That shrewd "Ah ee" denoteth grief or pain.

FAUN [nearing]

Ahi, ahi, ahi!

LAOMEDON

Ah! there he comes!
What bounds!—O Hermes, how he bounds along!
Like to a frog which boys do pelt with stones,
But straighter, without pause: and every leap
Cleareth a rood or more!—He's o'er the stream,
And takes the hurdles of the fold with ease,
And comes, and comes. . . . .

FAUN

Ahi, ahi, ahi!

LAOMEDON

Heyday, heyday! what fills thee with alarm?

FAUN

Ahi!

LAOMEDON

Take breath, O ægipan, take breath.

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FAUN

Ahi! Laomedon, art thou alone?

LAOMEDON

Yea, yea; see, here's a bowl; I'll pour thee out
A draught of milk.

FAUN

Nay, stay; thou art alone?

LAOMEDON

Alone I am, and shall be yet awhile:
My wife and daughters have gone off to bathe;
The heat had wearied them, and, ere sun-down,
They wended slowly by yon zig-zag path,
So through the valley wood, on by the stream,
To gain the shore, where, floored with sand, a trough
Between flat shelves of rock doth form a bath
Convenient for their youth and timid hearts;
Yon sail, that twinkles on the far sea marge,
My boys have hoisted; having rowed out thither,
They now await the freshening breeze of night,—
Behold, its first flaw travels the calm bay.

FAUN

You love a sober speech and call it best;
Grave rounded syllables; but oh, give ear!
Ahi, ahi! my tale will not support
A measured speech;
It must come like the wind,

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Gust upon gust,
With rapid sweeping,
Curve following curve,
Until the waves are tossing and can roar.

Oh, has the zephyr won thy heart to love,
With beauty daring all the other winds
To give him chase? or has
A child armed with a branch
Of silver-willow catkins,
Who dances round the men at work and laughs
His merry gibes?
Oh! it is worse
Than when it falls and hurts itself and weeps,—
More suddenly ended and more utterly,—
When the fair youthful woman,
Brandishing her spear,
Flaunting her cape of spotted leopard skin,
Prancing a white unsaddled horse
As full of bounding mettle as her glance is,
Gashed shrieks and wounded topples to the ground!
Ah! it is worse than when a lovely day is
In rushing storm englutted,
To see her dragged by one foot from the fight,
Amid the hooves whirled by a frantic steed,
Her head trailed through the dust, her poor bruised face

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Like a down-beaten muddied flower, fainted,—
Her white hands trodden upon,
Her white hands trodden upon.
What pain! alas, what pain!

LAOMEDON

What hast thou seen, ah me! that makes thee weep
That art not wont to weep? Thou cam'st so straight,
That com'st at other times so waywardly;—
Seeking the ferret's hole beneath the hedge,
Chasing the rabbit with a merry whoop,
Mocking the blue-tit swinging upside-down
With his 'chin chin,' thy fingers in thy teeth,
From lichened bowl picking the mealy moth,
And prying into all creation's hopes.
What ails thee? hast thou seen a goddess fight?
For goddesses do fight among the gods,
Though men with women fight not on the earth.

FAUN

Ahi, ahi, ahi! if they did not
I should be as I always am to-day,
But they put on short tunics
Scarce covering half their thighs;
The baldrick o'er their shoulders
And quivers they put on;
To the bow set foot and knee,
String it with twanging cord

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And fit the notchéd shaft;
Javelin and spear take up;
And mount the steed and spur him, wearing straps
Wound round the heel and ankle, tightly wound;
They wheel and prance and canter,
And make him arch his neck,
Rear,—and with delicate knees
Cling to his moistening flanks.
A thousand rode together, poising darts,
Behind them those with other arms came on;
All flaunting down a green-sward valley came
Between Arcadia's gentle holted hills.
It was for beauty like a fleet at sea,
Or like an hundred swans
Sailing before the breeze across a lake!
Their vests of daffodil, or pallid pink
Or milky violet! their saffron caps
And hoods like birds for sudden wing-like flaps!
Their white and piebald mounts! the rich green sward,
The morning light, the blossoming hawthorn trees!
The zephyr's music in the holts that crown
With delicate fern-like trees, each soft knoll's top!
I thought the night had borne me heavenward
And in Olympus I had waked from sleep;
And when their war-song rose
Long tears of rapture ran across my face:

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Apollo made it, or, if 'twas not he,
Why, Marsyas died for nought.

Then heard I shouts, male voices,
And turning round I saw them come,
The men of Attica;
With archers on the hills
In bands of twenty strong,
And horsemen in the plain,
And infantry drawn up in branching glens
Which sloped from either side down to the meads;
I knew their stations had been ta'en with care;
And soon the women would have turned the range,
And both those armies in each other's view
Must stand opposed.

In the boughs of an oak I have quaked, where four roads met,
To watch upon either hand draw near to the cross
A boy and a girl both lovely and light of foot,
With life escaping out of unhindering eyes;
My heart has ached for fear that they should not laugh,
Not utter the kindly word when they met, but withstand
The power of either's beauty, and shamefac'd pass,
Fighting desire in their breasts for lack of a heart
Gallant with daring and sense; my pulse has stood still.

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But, for fearing the thing that those nearing armies might do,
When they met in the widening meads at the foot of the hills,
My blood it grew cold, so long a time it stood still.
For now a silence settled on both their hosts,
As a wistness fell on those children, when they heard,
Each unseen, the other's approaching step on the road;
For scouts had sighted and made to both sides report.
Ah, that hush was like a December night in my soul,
And dull the sound of the hooves as the dismal sound
In the winter forest that wakes one upon a thaw.

Ahi, ahi, ahi, it was shrewd pain!
And not with a radiant welcome and hearty laugh
Each fronted each; but with a shout like a curse,
With a yell that had stricken the lion's heart with fear,
They on to each other rushed.
Ah! the eyes, that saw it, bleed;
And my ear is a wounded sense!
These were men, that their terrible spears
Hurled at the female breast:
These were men, who the well-aimed arrow
Let fly in the eyes of a girl.

LAOMEDON

Faun, thou hast dreamed, this cannot be, is not;
I think I know enough this to deny.

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Some bitter herb hast eaten and slept ill;
This has been born from fumes; some weed's rank sap
Deludes thee, Faun; there's wolf's-bane in thy blood!
Thou hast seen perchance in wild October night,
After the vintage, some the coarser hinds
Fight with their callets, and hast seen may be
Both wounds and blood dealt upon womankind;
Their clothes rent then, they by the hair were dragged:
They shrieked, they yelled, they tore with nails and teeth.
This in the fair spring night returned to thee,—
The drunken riot, the hideous lustful rage
Transformed and tuned by trees above thy sleep.
There, with life-giving scent of May-time turf
And blossom's bounty floating the air of night,
Thy nostrils dilating, coloured thy dream has been
With delicate clarity; while agile forms,
Such as the Spring befit, rehearsed those crimes
With which the Autumn rude thy soul had laden:
For know, the gently reared have gentle hearts.

FAUN

Nay, this was no dream; not at all!
Oh, believe me! for I have plucked no berries,
Have eaten no spotted leaf nor any tongue-shaped,—
Like the adder's tongue, so shaped, so venomed,—
Nor none with prickles touched; the wholesome alone
Have made my salads, and I am not deceived;

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It was there, I can show thee the place, and lead thee thither:
Nor these were not country wenches,
Nor did them resemble as dreams resemble
The world and men and gods;
These were the make of princesses, as thou hast told me:
And tended flowers that stand thy house before
Over the weed in the ditch bear not the palm
So far as these o'er some rich herdsman's child,
When, beauty ripe, she wears her very best;
For splendid purposes had these been trained,
And had the aspect of untiared queens;
Were like the tears of the morning for freshness;
Like the arms of the evening thrown up for weariness
Such was the radiance of their arms;—but thrown up,
Oh! thrown up in fright, in terror thrown up,
Those lovely and blood-splashed arms!

I was not on fire for them; think it not of me!
I viewed them not as our wild faunesses; no,
Though I have chased a nymph,
It was not so to-day;
I was sadder than a man to-day.

I will pray Pan fervently
That he may inspire me

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With a ditty expressive of that mood
Whose sorrow was richer than joy.
He will do it,
For he is a sad god at his hours;
In the evening he is sad:—
Very often.

LAOMEDON

The men fought them, thou sayest? lanced them with spears?
Had they no pity then, seeing them bleed?
Surely their hearts were touched then, they stayed then?
The dreadful and upraised sword
Was stayed then, was dropped then? and they
Ran to those they had wounded, lifted them, helped them,
And were at once most gentle with their hands?

FAUN

No! nothing of that; for these,
Though they were hurt, were terrible;
Though they bled, they hated;
Though they died, they did not shed tears:
Their knees and arms were unstrung,
But their hearts were not.
Overthrown and puddled round with blood,
They struck at those who approached;
It was not safe to be merciful:
Though of those men some felt pity,

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None showed it and lived.
It were better to have been a horse in that battle;
The strong steed knew not
Where he planted his hoof;
He ruined bosoms
That should have suckled heroes,
The children of a god;
But he knew it not.
If he broke the thigh of beauty,
Or crushed the loins
That had sate him so firmly,
With such elegance as the moon has—
The moon that rides white clouds—
Or the sea-nymph whom a dolphin
Bears with pride as with pride he bare her.
This the dumb steed knew not;
But they, the men,
Knew what they did.

Look you,
To destroy beauty
Is what the year doth; the flower
Springs up in tenderness,
Is reared in elegance,
Sometimes to majesty,
But withered it giveth no more delight to the eye

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Than an old creased ragged dusty kerchief!
Behold,
The storm it ravageth the sweet season;
Is it not then the fairest trees that suffer most?
What is the sea when tempest belloweth?
Not that wooer which erewhile
The youth, nay even
The maiden could not withstand;
But must be naked
And, bathing, intimately know
The caress of living waters?
A horse is very much as a wind—
It raceth, it is spurred, it becometh wild,
And in madness it rageth;
It hath the form of speed as wind hath the sound;
It forgetteth itself in everything it doth.

Needs must be that beauty perish,
A brief thing everywhere beneath the stars;
If it be otherwise among them,
None will wonder when it is known:
But here we see it short-lived;
Yet is Spring as constant as the fall,
The bud as seer'd petal sure
Despite both storm and frost,
And in despite

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Of the terrible hooves of the horse,
The female child
Shall be born and reared in beauty,
And ride and curb the steed
With the grace of those;
But the men who saw them
Shall not see these,
Or if they see them
Be old and chill,
Dull, and of no mettle to enjoy:
And this those men,
Destroying that beauty, knew.
Ah, and they know
More clearly yet by now!

LAOMEDON

Indeed, indeed, O Faun, thy words are wise;
Such truth as ne'er before sits on thy lips:
This is the pain of thought, and our soul's goad,
This is the spur of man, and sad he is;
To the child alone Spring comes with capturing glee;
Only to youth with sweet co-ordinate soul,
And powers akin to theirs, will like their own;
The man mature is braced to undertake
What, the last Autumn, had been judged too hard;
For him the Spring has come like self restored.
To age but as reprieve from pain it comes:

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The laughing face throws on them some faint smile,
As from a shield the pale round lights a wall
Shed by its brilliant blaze; but oftenest, ah!
The envy of sour impotence is theirs,
Or dull regret, for they cannot be cheered,
Nor can they bless the kindness that would cheer;
Then o'er the grave Spring treads unheeded quite.

FAUN

Give me the milk, Laomedon; I thirst.
Thanks. Ah! the milk is good,
As sweet it seems to me
As in those lovely bosoms there was stored
For infants that shall never wail for it.
They broke, they broke, and scattered far and wide,
Even so suddenly as I have seen
The cherry tree almost to one sole gust
Give up its bloom.
Like petals in the breeze, like butterflies,
They headed for the hills,
For shelter with loose rein
On all sides fleeing!
As when among the sheep
A young dog wantonly—that has not learned
To gather in the flock on Helicon,
And make a white drift like late-lingering snows
Among the rocks and cactus of a glen—

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As when such young cur wantonly will bark
And run and worry; as then fly the sheep
In headlong terror, so those fair queens fled.
But no Apollo from the clear sweet sky
Hastened, as then sore-vexed the shepherd hastes
To stay the cur with swift correcting stone,
And gather-to the sheep with sager dogs,—
Ah no, ah no, Apollo!
Apollo, where wast thou?
Afar on white Olympus' brow?
Or didst thou some fair Daphne follow?
Or wast thou minding sheep
For some boy shepherd's love
Upon Thessalian steep?—
While in thy car above
A Phaëton, a mortal's child,
The reins had from thy hand beguiled,
With silly pride to drive his father's team,
Heedless of evils, flush-faced, in a dream:—
Cheeks flushed, curls streaming,
Rapt standing in thy car,
In daylight dreaming;
Blissful as sleepers are,
Heedless of evils be they near or far,
Of evils heedless be they near or far.

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But close, close, close to me
A feminine splendour on a whirlwind steed
Rushed up, flashed forth, passed by,
Plunging through the crashing brakes
Deep between trees, on, on:
And others—I could hear them broach the wood
At diverse distances;
Some with shrewd wails of pain
For jolted wound, or blow from low-hung bough:
So turned and hastened towards the wooded hills,
Leaving the open valley and the meads
And the harsh voices of victorious men;
And, following tracks some hour, came upon
A stream, and, by the stream
One crouched, half stripped, wiping a wounded foot.
Her bare arms, shaped as dreams of courage are
In some young lover's mind,
Glowed bright with strength, efficiency, and grace:
The woundless foot bespoke a power to dance,
To race, to wheel, and leap,
As tunny's tail expresseth subtler force
And water-quelling feats of deftness rare.
Behind, into an oak bush leaned her shield
And her long spear: her face
Was strange and sweet as when the spell of thought
Lays hold upon a child,

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Who feels no captive yet,
And, when he shall, that instant will escape:
Her hair, a nut-red, hung
Unnetted down her back;
Some vests on which she sate dipped in the stream,
And in the water dipped
One of her silvery greaves
Shapely and curved:
Not far away her horse,
Where the bank widened and the sunshine fell,
Lay panting with green branches strewn o'er him,
Green branches she had first drenched in the stream.
Then, as she staunched her wound,
Her shift fell open and I saw her breast
Quick heaving still:
The flowers that grow upon that lush stream-bank,
Fed with green half-veiled light
Or short half-hours of sun,
Deep in the wood,
No wind could reach to stir; but like some belled
Faint-flushed anemone
Wherein a bee is hid
Her bosom shook.—
I shall not speak about her loveliness
Beyond what now is said:
She never saw me and I left her there.

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Soon I on traces came of wildest flight:
The white and spunky end of some dead branch
Snapt on the ground—the wounded toadstool clump
Scattered in chips of sulphur or shrewd red—
Rent and dragged tangle, briar, clematis,
Or woodbine—clotted leaves scooped up, turned over;
Black, moist, and glistening on the dusty mats,
They form where'er the gloom forbiddeth weeds;
Last, ploughed up dints in ruddier needles led me
On to a hill-side plateau: mid the pines
Through which a glade was opened o'er the land,
A shred of silk there fluttered 'gainst the sky.

At foot of tall and grandly-towering pines
Was where she fell; for there she dead lay fallen,
Between two groves of grandly-towering pines.
Yea, here she fell; for here she dead lay fallen
With both arms stretched beyond her upturned face,
Pointing the way her steed had madly fled;
Her feet, where their wake ended in dank grass
Through which they had been trailed some thirty yards,
Lying wound in their straps and scored with scratches;
A spotted skin belting the tattered vests
That chilly shook upon her loins, or framing
A globed discovered breast and firm full throat:
Perfectly still: and in her raven hair

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Nested her face like snow on cyprus cradled,
While near one hand a yellow daffodil
With unbruised stalk flaunted its winsome head.
There, while I gazed upon her, I could see
The quiet country melt in haze away
Miles beyond miles. There beautiful she lay,
The tall pines barely murmuring far aloft,
Not stooping and not conscious she was there:
Yet once I saw the ripe and rustling corn
Arch down above a baby sleeping naked;
Tender and careful as Demeter was
Of her Persephone at eighteen months,
So fond the wheat bowed o'er that baby lying
Not far from where men reaped between two fields
Upon a patch of close-grown clover leaves.
A pitcher in a wattled jacket cased,
And food tied with a napkin, stood beside
Its curly flaxen poll; the patterned shawl,
Which once had wrapped it, 'neath its legs lay crumpled,—
For great the warmth and sturdy those fine limbs.
There, under curving heavy-fruited stalks,
And nodding ears of dry and rustling corn,
Between those fields outspread like oceans rolling,
The two-years-old slept sound; and I, who heard
The reapers sing the contest and defeat
Of Linus, to give time to their hard toil,

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Might watch her grace in slumber half an hour,
And wonder whether she had dreams or no.
It was a child, whose prettiness in play
Might well have charmed the bird down from the tree:
I, gazing on that dead form, thought of her,
And felt as then I felt, and stole away,
As though a-feared lest she might wake, and scream
To see my horns, brown visage, and white teeth.

LAOMEDON

Meseems that these must have been amazons,
Beyond the isles that live, beyond the isles;
I have heard tell (but ne'er did credit much)
Of their strange way of life and warlike strength:
And yet, since that thy tongue seems new-endowed,
Perchance thou art inspired of a god
And speakest things that are not, to win love—
To win love hinting grandeurs not contained
In what contains us, air and sight and sound;
For that they should invade our Hellas seems
In very sooth a dream.

FAUN

No, no! no dream!
Not far from where that lovely warrior lay
I sate me down in deep and solemn mood,
Then came a bird and sang,—
Sang and flew off once more;

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A squirrel came and wondered what it meant;
The nimble rogue had hoped I'd give him chase.
He knew not she lay there in middle glade
Dead, yet as beautiful as hope of health
After one has been sick. And it grew cold,
And the damp spring-tide evening settled in;
Between the tall sad trunks the light grew grey,
And green gave place to blackness in the grass:
With strident cries at times, but ne'er a song,
The birds had gone to roost; and silence reigned
Like the great future, absolute control
Exerting without any sensible sign;—
Lord of an hour, as that great realm of hope
Imposeth all life long. Mutely I prayed
That she to joy might even yet return,
Then looked and saw the stars shine through the boughs,
And far away I heard a silver sound.
At first methought it was the rising moon
Did make a music pure and clear as dew;
But, lo! 'twas answered from the west, and soon
Out of the south was gently born again.
I did not move, but mine eyes filled with tears;
And now from many quarters all at once,
And then again in silver dialogue,
Across the inlets of the sea,
Across the plains,

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Across successive ranges of the hills,
Fainter than music, more magical than harps,
It rose and was approaching from all sides;
I rocked myself for bliss,—a hallali,
A hallali on horns of crystal sounded.
The nymphs of Artemis they blew those horns
On all the hills, in every forest's heart,
And down the valleys, and across the plains,
And near the distant inlets of the sea,
Where'er a woman's body they had found.
Now close behind me, twenty paces back,
It sounded: and I, turning, saw one stand
With all the dignity and charm of night,
In a white tunic with a grey-green cloak,
Beside that prostrate sister of like grace.
Then knelt she and laid both the arms to rest,
Next straightened both the knees, and closed the shift
Above the breast, ordered the dew-damp hair,
And kissed the eyelids, having lowered them;
Went then and gathered young ferns not far off;
With these she covered up that lovely corse,
Then drew a circle round it with an arrow,
Saying some words of heaven,—some rare spell,
Doubtless of might to stay
The onward rushing wolf, and yet so fine
That it could hold the spider and the ant,

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Forbid their entrance like a crystal wall,
And owl or chough or vulture on the wing
Suddenly turn to folly, and their instinct,
Never at fault before, lead far astray,
As though their hearts felt love, and they were gone
To vainly haunt round some fair rock-nymph's lodge,
Or to persuade the moon with lover's sighs.
Sounding again that glory on her horn,
She turned and passed away among the trees.
Soon I arose and sought the freer air
And gazed out o'er the night ; and here and there,
Lo! a white tunic and a green-grey cloak
Of fainter than a phosphor radiance, gleamed
Upon the plain, or on the sides of hills.
Ere long I knew they gathered toward that place,—
Winding their horns at times, the while they went,—
Where the main battle raged ; and I made thither.
But, when I saw
How many queens were busy on that field,
And with what rapid gliding steps they moved,
Fear fell upon me lest I were surprised,
Actæon-like, and changed to more a beast,
Losing both speech and laughter :—so I fled
Just as the morning was about to break.
An hundred miles have I come straight to thee,
Mine only friend, Laomedon ; and now

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Haste thee, O shepherd, to return with me;
For though they doubtless buried some last night,
And will to-night inter yet more, I deem
It shall be full a week ere that they quit
Their travail o'er Arcadian hills and dales:
So come, for we may see them at their work
And in our hearts put by so pure a vision,
That though old age and blindness fall on us,
We shall know hours of rapture to the end.

LAOMEDON

O Faun, I do believe thee, and will come;
For what thou tell'st is worthy of the gods,
And holy Artemis would act e'en so.
First let me say farewell unto my wife
And daughters, for I hear them at the house.
They have returned and shall provide a scrip
With cates and meat, figs and good flask of wine;
For thou hast fasted long, and several days
Must pass before I can be here once more.

FAUN

Laomedon, I will await thee; haste!—
So good a man both gods and nymphs respect;
I shall be safe with him. The poor wild faun,
With that kind shepherd who once saved his life,
Shall look upon the holy Artemis
And all her stately and white-tunic'd nymphs.

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A man walks slow, our journey will take time.
But, see, he doth return; his wife and girls,
Who take their leave, come with him; I will hide.

DAUGHTER

O father, wilt thou go an hundred miles?

LAOMEDON

Eudora, yea; an hundred miles, my girl.

HIS WIFE

Laomedon, be heedful and not rash;
Anger no nymph, intrude not on their rites.

LAOMEDON

Dear, fear me not; farewell.

LITTLE DAUGHTER

An hundred miles is further than the caves?

ELDEST DAUGHTER

Yes, Doto, for the caves are scarce ten miles.

LAOMEDON

Farewell, my sweetest little one, farewell;
Oh, I could kiss you all away to-night!

ANOTHER DAUGHTER

There is the faun; I saw him; mother, mother!

THE WIFE

He will not hurt you, dear; 'tis a kind faun.

EUDORA

Father, I cannot think an hundred miles:

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It is beyond, beyond, too far, and like
The moon and stars; or are they nearer us?

LAOMEDON

Further, I think, but ask the reremice that;
Farewell, be good.—Dear wife, one last farewell!

ALL

Farewell, farewell, farewell; good-bye, good-bye!

FAUN

Hist!
I to the hay rick on yon ridge will pass
And there await thee; I cannot walk slow.

LAOMEDON

Good, good; agreed!—Ha, ha! see, he is off;
My best strides are no match for bounds like that;—
Didst thou see, Doto, how he leaped i' the dark?

DOTO

Ha, ha, the funny faun!

LAOMEDON

Good-bye, sweet one.

ALL

Father, good-bye!

EUDORA

The darkness down the hill
Hides him so fast, he seems a shadow now
That waves its hand upon a dark grey wall.

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THE MOTHER

There, let us all go home and get to bed;
The boys will not be back till near on dawn;
I hope they will bring fish, for all the meat
Did I thrust in his wallet, wrapped in leaves.
If it be wise to try and see the gods
I know not; but your father is a man,
And men will not be cautious in such things;
So let us get to bed and pray for him.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR. UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

I. THE CHOLERA KING

"This is a poet who has got into his art that 'Celtic mystical fermentation' of which Dowson spoke. His poems are beautiful and rare, for there is more in them than the impression, caught and perpetuated at that artist moment of which Rossetti was the type. . . . We shall not make a mistake in thinking that we have here, perhaps a little earlier than we might, an indication of the direction which all the best work of the next generation is to take."

The Westminster Review, Feb., 1900.

II. THE ROAD OF THE AMAZONS

"He can take these old phrases and stories and tell them over anew, in a manner that is full of the pure freshness and candour of the past, recalling the Greek way of telling them, and the naturalness with which it set down only its subject, but its own manner, and not the half-the eighth-truth of my own disposition in it."

The Times Literary Supplement, March 16th, 1900.

III. THE BALLADS AND OTHER POEMS

"Mr. Moore usually plays on the keys that he has, in the best way he knows; rather distant from any one of our great Victorian writers, he does not, so far as can be perceived, derive his weaknesses or qualities in our lack sense; he neither speaks consciously in us, nor even in our ears and eloquently; nor yet does he seek to win our homage by the parade of an interesting personality. Instead, it is his poems and poems alone, it will be a happy and hopeful age that better types are at hand."

The Contemporary Review, Feb., 1900.

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THESEUS

"What am I? O thou sea, with all thy noise,
Thou tell'st me not:—and thou great sun, that leavest
Once more thy ruby red on little clouds
Where thou hast dived from sight, art mute and art
No parent of an answer to my prayer,
My daily prayer to thee. Those clouds, are they
As I am? and shall I, as they will, lose
What fastens now the eyes of men on me?
Youth, as they say, is that but as yon red
Which dims while I gaze on it, dims and fails
Before the breath of all-disabling night?
It makes me shudder: is there such a breath
To conquer youth and make men lose their glow?
A gulf to swallow youth as night those tints?
And shall I scurry as the storm-chased cloud,
Darkling and teased to tears, and torn with groans?
Ah, must it come upon me to be spent
And no more heard of? Is there a gulf like that?

The men I meet, have they been once like me,
And has a tyrant force so bowed their backs,
Browbeaten them and taught them furtive haste,
Made all their actions relish of escape
From Fate, that only baffler of the gods?
For even the old man, who has lived well

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Whose smile of fortitude has blessed and blessed,
Day after day, his friends through fifty years,
When his knees totter and his arm grows weak,
Though the gods love him, yet, to please Fate, he
Must be content to palter and lose all;
'Neath cover of a smile, be quite undone,
Yea, steal away, stand by, and let the grand
Converging circumstances tempt in vain
To some exploit worthy his life laid down,
Needed by all the world, but which weak hands
And knees that shake can now forbid him bring
To masterful fruition. Yea, Fate's fool,
Amidst the dearth of younger men endowed
With spirit and resources like his own,
He must sit down, give counsel, then unsay;
Even as I have had to fume 'mid men
Who lacked my heart, yet own'd the strength I lacked,
And watch the chance go by—feeling it fleet,
The unseized moment when a god cried 'Dare!'
'Tis sullen Fate thus thwarts the hopeful god,
Thus ends the good man, thus begins with me;
Who oftenest, ah! cloudeth the whole life's course,
Who treads close at the heel, breathes in the neck,
—Yet drives no sharp spear crashing through the breast,
Plunges no knife sideways between the ribs,
And cracks the skull beneath no knotty club,
*

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Nor throws a noose about the craning neck,—
But fouls the action in the doing, mars
The work between the hands, and wries the thought
Before the lips have shaped it; mocks all hope
With wretched failure, and forbids to mend,
Spurring us ever to disaster new:
It is so, comes upon me, I shall fail;
For I have failed before; each year have failed
To roll this stone aside, which hides the proof,
The sign of whether I am no man's son,
Begotten of a man who wore a sword,
Or of some rascal whose long tongue deceived
A woman's heart. Shame hounds me when I think
That I have cheeks which flush to hear men's praise,
Who cannot say that I am such an one,
And add thereto 'my father sails afar'
Or 'fetcheth golden apples from the tree
That the sweet women sit beneath and sing,'
Or 'is in Cyprus, where he works a mine,'
Or 'followeth wars in Thrace,' or 'seeks a cure
At Delphi for some strange unkind disease.'
Thus other lads can vaunt and need not come,—
What day the sun behind yon little isle,
Each autumn sets for one who standeth here,—
They need not come down to this lonely beach
And tug at this dull stone, till they are faint;

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Nor as their limbs grow cold ache with despair,
To hope and craven fear not slaves by turns;
And, if they oftener bear defeat in speed
Or when we wrestle, fence, or hurl the quoit,
A father teacheth what there lacked, and how
With greatest likelihood to compass it.
While I
Visit my mother where she sits and works,
As women work, weaving in wall-cloths wide
Figures of men and gods, and hear her talk
As women talk, with smiles and hopeful words.
Oft will she bid me stand in such a way
As Heracles or Jason rightly stand,
Then silently doth bend her to her task,
That she may fill their pictures out from mine;
While I forget her and that busy room,
Watching those heroes lay the red fir poles
Before the prow of Argo on the grass,
High up some glade, high in the forest hills,
Whence the vast Ister and Absyrtus draw
Their waters, and where stags, of huger build
Than horses, stand forth on the brows of cliffs
And bell at man's intrusion, ere they turn
With long quick strides to seek yet virgin wilds.
From morn to eve, before the Argo there,
They laid the poles, then dragged her over them;

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And on they toiled, week after week, right up;
Then rigged as 'twere a second keel of plank,
And sledded her across the fields of snow,
And to encircling ocean brought her down.
They did this: I, who helped them in my thought,
Have heard my mother laugh, and waked to know
She could not tell me who my father was."

Thus far the lad with many a heart-drawn sigh;
Then eased his shoulders of their short grey cloak,
And tossed his hat of straw upon the ground.
Firm in vague twilight, naked, fleckless, blond—
Save that a sandal strap still laced each foot
And that his head was dark with clustered curls—
He stood as those whose prayer bestirs mute lips;
Then gravely did approach a sea-worn rock
Half buried in the shingle, wan; for sand,
With which the scouring wind its slatey hue
Had scored, was lodged in all its hollows, wan
With livid marblings, lonely, rounded, smooth,
Planted as for a bourne unto that sea
Whose hoarse waves gnawed the grating beach hard by.
While, back from there, in dry and yellow reeds
Which belted the cove round, wind rattled bleak.
Beyond, dark hills rose, tranquil as the sky.
Suddenly his curls shook, he felt both arms,

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Searched with his feet for purchase, then bent down
And digging with both hands in the loose beach
Obtained a thorough grip. His foothold gave
And gave beneath each crooked and straddled leg;
Their knees touched to the beach, pressed in, dug down,
While sinews on broad thighs, his hollowed loins,
And curved back hardened, knotted, and showed up:
Sweat, from a streaming forehead, dripped into
Those dangling curls which bounced before his eyes
And teased that burning furnace of his face:
But the stone gave, and his subsiding effort
Sank down upon it shifted in its bed.
Some time he sobbed, then knelt and sucked his hands
Bleeding and numb, and pinched between salt stones:
Rose then; his knees were raw; his chin was rasped,
For he had ground it on that sullen block;
With deep-drawn breaths he poised his limbs in the air,
Relaxed their o'er-strained joints, and chafed their thews;
And, having mopped his hot brow with his cloak,
Sat down and smiled because the stone had moved.

Ah! who shall say how his heart's throbs died down,
As war-noise in beleaguered town subsides
At night-fall; for the sentries clearly see
The foemen building fires to cook their meal.
For then, as women creep out to the walls

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To find their wounded husband or dead son,
His fears came out to rummage likelihoods—
Disturb the calculating eye that broods
O'er the main chance, and,—as a hapless girl
That, having sought and sought and nowhere found,
Not even a lover's corse to lave and tend,
But knows he has been butchered, or else shipped
Afar in noisome mine to feel the lash,
Goes frantic and runs screaming through the night,—
So one fear did bedin his brain the most,
And made all life seem madness, and the gods
Unhearing scorns at distances extreme.
—If he should roll the stone back from a blank,
An empty bed! His heart stood still! There was
No future; such a moment ought to be
The last!—yet, as the old gnarled warrior stands
Hearing that girl run mad, so still, within,
There stood a knowledge that foresaw the morn
And the spent tatters of that storm of grief
Subdued, ungoverned, drifting through the streets,
Drift on through wildered prattle, sometimes laugh,
But never know itself and hopes again;—
So, far within, he saw all time succeed,
No consonancy in it with the days—
Those days of sterling effort, gone before.

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He thought it best almost to now give up.
But then the all-conquering hope to find a god,
A hero at the least, had been his sire,
Brought him upon his feet and cleared his mind:
That which was raised from good must go to good;
But from a lie the fair thing sprung at first
Would be reduced and end in utter waste.

Choosing such larger stones as gave foothold,
He banked them up where he his feet would rest;
And, having scooped quite clear sufficient grip
For his sore-smarting hands, a second time
He bowed his back and worked down with his knees,
And heeded not annoy from clammy curls,
But put his soul into his boyish arms,
And hugged and raised the stone, then rolled it over,
Dragged by sheer weight himself, dragged sideways down;—

Not long to lie, for he had seen! now saw!—
For into heaven, lo! the moon had glid,
Between their woods the dewy hills were grey,
And 'mid the reeds lagoons were path'd with light,
While countless silver patines danced at sea,—
Saw! saw! in sheath of inlay capped with gold
A sword, its baldrick, and beneath, a shield
Cased in a leathern bag, but printed through,

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And on the bag large words, "My son, my Theseus,
That worthy of thy sire now hast proved,
Come to me, come to Attica, in Athens,
Ask for King Ægeus, and bring with thee these."

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Much am I wronged, and Colchis far away
I curse; for there this tortured heart first beat—
Ah, gently as the summer aspen's leaves
Then beat! but now, I know not if it beat,
Or hath but recollection of loud thuds,
That drearily echo through its stony wards.
Severe Orthia, mistress of my youth,—
Thwart Hecate, that scowledst on my choice
When I was even so foolish as to love,—
Artemis, that repairest the youth of trees
And yearly fledgest woodland glades with fern,—
This have I woven, this my needle wrought
Slowly to beauty,—as thy Spring adorns,
Fold after fold, a rich and worthy land—
With leaves of varied shapes, with tints of green
More subtly diverse than the lyre's notes,
With blossoms of a flute-like rapturous hue,
Sheer bliss in blue, in pink or purple sobs,
Deep drone of reds and saffrons, shouts of gold:
And not content with this, but, god-like still,—
Since through the dusky inwards of the wood,
Between the branches, wings the feathered life
Whose rapid pulse astonishes the hand
Of ill-shod mortals trudging after joy,—
I have portrayed tit, finch, or crested wren,

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Flashing athwart each sombre interspace
My broidered wreaths encircled; but the snake,
The silent pole-cat, fierce red ant, the wasp,—
These, though my thoughts were like them, are not here.
Yet here is what might make the forest groan,
To think its wizard influence had failed
Impress on any life a character
So secretly dread, though framed to almost please,—
This brown, not, like that of dead leaves, inert,—
This brown rich like the burnt cheek of a stone
Squared to be plinth unto some column grand;
Near which the masons light a little fire,
Whereat to broil their salt-dried fish in lard,
When o'er the cockling scales and stiff-ribbed fins,
Again, such browns mingled with golds, blue dusk,
And silver scorched, increase beneath the heat;
While sometimes, in the afternoon, a storm,
Parting his heavy indigo palls of rain,
Will show such browns above the sulphurous west;—
This brown, the dye in which I soused my web,
Is colour of poison; and for this is veiled
The light which else would make my chamber bland
As those which women love, or wives or maids,
To have for toilet, sleep, close thought, and prayer.
But I to Hecate have prayed alone,
And have foregone sweet aspect of white sheets

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Which only where the light abounds seem pure;
And, for two months, have laboured without air,
Till I am livid, and this silver disk
Changes not hue to tell me I am sick,
But gives back eyes alone that look like life,
And all the rest like death, like Jason's love!

For I was married and ravished from afar,
And, for some gentle words and easy smiles,
Pretence of heat, effected, for that man,
All he had failed in else—to plough with bulls,
And sow the dragon's teeth, and those to slay
Who, fully-armed, sprang like a field of corn
Not through three months, but in three minutes, ripe;
These I enabled him to reap, and seize
The sacred serpent-guarded fleece of gold:
For, like a girl, I thought love was a god,
And I had lived in boundless hopes of love;—
Nor wearied reading scrolls of crabbed signs,
Nor ceased from skilful practice of my hands,
Whether I sprinkled sweet herbs over meats,
Or did distil tart syrups from rank canes,
Or ground to powder dried and pregnant roots,
Or with precisest measure mingled draughts
Compelling slumber or restoring health:
And, with a pride beyond my little size,

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Scorned brawny suitors for their ignorance,
And gazed across the thrilling sea with hope,
Or kept my wakeful eyes upon the stars,
Whose millions intimate a prodigal power
Which, then, my eager thought assigned to love.
This fervency I, with myself, bestowed
On Jason for lip music and a smile.
And not this only, for a perjured man
I brought to childhood back,—thine aged foe,
Aeson,—my courteous bridegroom's palsied sire,
The soiled and blunted weapon doubled up,
Which oft thee wounded deep, Virginity;
For many wives his lust had gloried in,
And crowds of children from his veins had drained,
In petty and diluted measures, blood
That once was opulent, almost divine:
I, having drawn that weakness from his limbs
Which torpid now and chilly there abode,
Through every vacant artery did force
The green and joyous sap of thriving plants,—
Juice of crushed stalks mixed with their ropy gums,
And purpled bright with strength from berry and grape,
Full of a stinging, swift, and masterful
Vivacity;—his heart beat fast once more;
The man, remade, well-nigh resembled fauns
Who, houseless, worship trees,—a white-haired child

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That, henceforth, sang himself to death in woods,
And bathed for very rapture in tall corn
And, silver-maned, by night the hill-brows haunted—
His eyes, the wonder and envy of younger men,
Beaming with joyance far surpassing theirs.
But in return for this, my husband wooes
Ripe Glauce, Corinth's daughter, and would bring
A second victim home unto his bed.
Therefore, I know that love is but a dream;
And with this toil have wholly purged my mind,
The while my pauseless needle stitched and stitched;
Setting my thought on baneful Hecate,
To rid myself of hope that dupeth all.
And energy in me has so increased,
That now I feel, my thought doth correspond
With that which wields the empire of the stars,
And fills sheer darkness with a smell of blood,
And sends the green growth forth from gloomy earth
With gifts, some good, the more part charged with harm,
But all disguised to attract, and those the most,
The deadliest, or least helpful. Thine I am,
Mother of Wolves delighting in the blood
Of dogs whom men have tamed, with pains and skill,
To guard their homes: thou Queen of Fears, whose lair
Is reached through endless caves, whose silver lamp,
Changeful and cold, distresseth female sleep,

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—Driving for them all comfort from the night,—
With counsel to fond ruin from despair;
Urging them no more battle with their fate,
Not choose like thee virginity, but hope
Beyond themselves and eye the virile youth;
Yet only in our hearts do those goods dwell,
Which we so fondly seek in lustful man.

For one who eyed no youth, a man mature—
For Glauce, apt to love, have I prepared
This gown, so fit to fascinate the eye
Of a fond vanity-indulging bride.
Behold how it designedly is cut;
Look, goddess, am I careful to succeed,
With open slashes left along the sleeve,
Where the white radiancy of arms shall shine?
See, see, the bosom is, between the breasts,
To tempt her not to wear an undervest,
Pinked with sweet open-work, which creamy tints
Become far better than a cold white smock!
And I, indeed, do send the like advice
With this, my wedding gift, which now I crease
In strictly even folds upon the floor,
And thus incase, first with a veil of lawn,
Then matted yew sprigs packed in layers deep—
Both against light and chemic influence

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Of Helios proof, in double thickness, last,
Of this new canvas bag, and cord it, so,
With scarlet; and my seeming kindly words,
Such as an aged wife might give to one
Whose youthful warmth shall solace her ag'd lord,
Here I insert beneath the knot, inscribed
On ivory tablets with style dipped in red.

As though I ne'er had married, Hecate,
Thine am I; and oh, shortly, when this robe
So gaily bloomed, so leafy, and so fair,
Draped on his second dupe, shall proudly meet
The warmth of nuptial altar-fires and sun,
At first with pleasant tingling, but soon, soon,
From smart increasing fast to blister and burn,
And scald, and seethe, and gnaw upon the flesh
It ever closer clings to,—in his sight,
Devouring those soft charms, the hope to enjoy
Had tempted him to call a second "Bride."
Soon, soon when I for thee, in utter dark,
Have put away my nearest, most real, hopes,
With a keen knife producing savour of blood
To fill thy tingling dark; Orthia dread,
My motherhood undone, returned to thee
With, for peace-offering dire, my murdered boys—
Who, if they lived, must live to be, or soon

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Or late, supplanted by another's births
(Ah, thirty years envies their five and six,
Life's sweetest, closed at once, exempt from worse!)—
Thou, who art cruel too, but to be kind,
Propitiated by infanticide,
O give me part in life the self-complete!
Like to a shooting star, direct and swift,
In dragon-harnessed chariot, dip, dip down,
Glide near the earth, when, from it passing, thou
Shalt, out from blinding silver reaching forth,
Lift me beside thee, Virgin pure and strong;
And I will never more consider love,
Nor stoop to hope, but spend my days as thine
In governance of herbs, and caves, and tides,
Stars, and frail strays of virgin life, are spent.

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LOVE'S FAINTNESS DEFIED

Kiss me!
Are we not farther from to-day
Than is to-morrow?
Steeped in reality, what love possesses,
Time doth but borrow;
Kiss me!
Canst fear what any voice may say,
When all man's knowledge clearly must be guesses?
Whilst joy is ours, like dogs to gain a bone
They'll fawn on us for what we leave alone.

Clasp me!
Like sand the falling moments close,
Stifling the weary:
To-morrow from to-day no force can sever,
Keepst thou but near me.
Clasp me!
Canst shudder at a falling rose,
When folly's proof must be, to prate of "ever"?
Whilst joy is ours, they'll seek us out to learn:
Those only died, who, loved, made faint return!

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LOVE'S FAINTNESS ACCEPTED

Ah, love, love is not what
We hope, we dream it is;
Not sure of victory.
'Tis hot, but pain is hot;
Swords wound, so may a kiss.
Though love be energy,
Should flow a current in a sea,
A passing-by of life by life,
Of force by force, fire by lightning, strife
By battle, eclipse of zest by zeal;—
Yet slowly love's inevitable seal
At times informeth the half-molten, malleable,
Stiff hours of life whose surfaces congeal
Before the lordly signet hath repeal:
Even then 'tis stamped so plain, so strangely well,
That the impression may be traced by all,—
Blind fate, sceptre, crown, and golden ball.

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LOVE'S LOSS LAMENTED

Birds sing but never speak;
Music is in the woods but not a word;
Nothing from flowers hath been heard;
Lips have sea-shells, no tongue;
And, though one through far caverns seek,
And though the silence there seem wrung,
No suffering hath the earth confessed;
In utterance for grief
No weeping cloud e'er sought relief;
And dumb woe heaves the ocean's breast.

O Mocked Heart, chant or brood!
Sob as trees leafy sough in rain!
That lily on thy brow explain
Never! Voice thou no tale!
An incommunicable mood
Be theirs who suffer wrong and fail
Not in themselves but through their love.
Why should such passion be confessed?
Entomb it ever in a breast
The wan flower grief may droop above.

The nightingales despair;
The woods are great with woe as they;
Even spring is very briefly gay;

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Like waves the sad shells rave;
Each cavern echoes like prison stair,
By which but sighs escape the brave,—
Those wisest men, of the wisest lands,
Who failed to cure the wrong
That afflicts creation, time as long
As tides have worn the sands,—
That after bliss on the heart lays hands
But breaks it not, Mocked Heart, still strong!
But breaks it not, Mocked Heart, too strong!

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A SECOND LAMENT FOR LOVE'S LOSS

O swift, O proud, O brave, O beautiful,
Thou steed, thou charger for a god,
What orient plateau hast thou trod?
Or, coursing steppes of heaven, didst thou pull
The Lord of Song
In gold car, full of joy, of rapture full?
For thou wast strong.

Oh pain! Oh wrong! Oh shame! Oh misery!
For now a groom, a base-born slave,
Has lashed thee; curbed thee, once so brave;
Thou to be noosed by cunning! furiously
To plunge, to fall,
Get up, rear, stumble, snort, foam, bleed, and be
Cowed after all!

Ah! favourite stallion of the sun,
When "Morning's Wonder" was thy name,
Effortless, dauntless wouldst thou run.
So noble once, art thou so tame?
Once swift, once proud, once brave, once beautiful,
What pain, what wrong, what shame, what misery
Has thine been that thou art not free?
That at this bridle thou shouldst pull?
O rash Desire, whose untaught eyes knew love,

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Those tears are hot:
True love has ceased, has ceased to be true love;
What was is not.

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THAT LAND

Oh, would that I might live for ever
Where those who make me happy dwell!
Because she other place names never
Desire doeth excellently well,
Now, wooing me;
There ease weds grace;
There thought is free,
Born like a smile upon a face,
Expressed as simply as a child
Kisseth its playmate, laughing gaily;
There, there, the courteous, joyous, mild
Train life to beauty daily,

There thought is free; for life is bound
Religiously, and sings while serving;
No hungry loneliness is found
Where beauty's law admits no swerving
But strengthens life;
Could I dwell there,
To me a wife
Were given wise and free and fair,
Not fettered with dead thoughts, not fainting
Because the night-mare world has lain
Athwart her hopes, but love acquainting
With beauty ever again.

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Ever again and again
Filling the eyes of our child
With the milk of paradise,—
Of which the soul is fain,
For which the heart is wild,
And tears are in the eyes:
Ah! that milk of paradise
Is happiness,
Is power to bless;
What balmy air to halcyon's wing
That power to those who make me glad is;
To bind my life, in bonds to sing,
The way such freedom may be had is;—
The way to gain the power to bless,
The one way to win happiness.

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KINDNESS

Of the beauty of kindness I speak,
Of a smile, of a charm
On the face it is pleasure to meet,
That gives no alarm!

Of the soul that absorbeth itself
In discovering good,
Of that power which outlasts health,
As the spell of a wood

Outlasts the sad fall of the leaves,
And in winter is fine,
And from snow and from frost receives
A garment divine.

Oh! well may the lark sing of this,
As through rents of huge cloud,
It breaks on blue gulfs that are bliss,
For they make its heart proud

With the power of wings deployed
In delightfullest air.
Yea, thus among things enjoyed
Is kindness rare.

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For even the weak with surprise
Spread wings, utter song,
They can launch—in this blue they can rise,
In this kindness are strong,—

They can launch like a ship into calm,
Which was penn'd up by storm,
Which sails for the islands of balm
Luxuriant and warm.

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A. CLUTTON BROCK, in *The Speaker*, Sept. 17th, 1904.

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"'For Dark Days' is a beautiful poem, one of the most beautiful that Mr. Moore has written. 'To Lida' suggests Tibullus: never, there is a dainty freshness of phrase and vision in the ode as a Greek vase, a wild beauty in 'To Lida,' and a measured grandeur, growing out of playfulness, in the ode on Death. One and all they are the work of a poet—a poet with a strong and thoughtful mind, a rich vocabulary, and a growing mastery over his thoughts and language."

The Times Literary Supplement, Sept. 30th, 1904.

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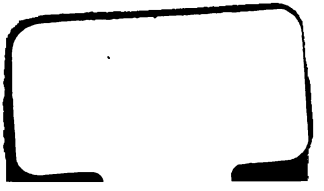

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